

Death's inevitability

Read Hebrews 9:24-28

January 12 was a happy day, a very happy day! One of my girlfriends and her husband became first time parents, giving birth to a darling little daughter. We rejoiced as we celebrated life. What no one at the time could predict was that January 12 was about to go down as one of the saddest days in the history of mankind – it would become a day of death – death to multiplied thousands; for it was on that day that what was called the worst earthquake in 200 years, measuring 7.0 on the Richter Scale, hit and devastated Haiti, leaving behind gruesome images of suffering and death.

Death is a subject that makes many people uncomfortable. And although we know that every single one of us has a future appointment with death, the fact that it is so final makes us want to shun discussions about it if we could. We hate to think of the finality that comes with death; we hate to think of saying goodbye forever to life here on earth; we can't bear to think of a permanent state of separation from our families, friends, jobs and the people and things we love. I've heard that even in cases where death is anticipated, such as situations involving lengthy or terminal illness, it can still seem sudden to those left behind to cope with their loss.

That may be why so many people are afraid of death. Some try to ignore its inevitability, they live their lives with no thought of eternity, behaving as if all that mattered were having as much fun and worldly pleasure as they could possibly handle. Others act as if by denying the reality of death, they could erase its existence. I've noticed with interest for instance that in recent years the trend seems to be moving away from wearing the traditional white or dark colors to funerals. Where at one time it was unthinkable for those in mourning to wear bright, happy colors, these are now gradually becoming the norm, even as a festive spirit seems to be replacing the once-upon-a-time atmosphere of sadness and gloom that characterized most funeral services.

But if we've learnt anything from Haiti's January 12 earthquake experience, it's that trying to steer clear of conversations about death or pretending that death won't happen to us is not the answer. Death can strike the most unsuspecting of us quite unexpectedly. It does not discriminate between children and adults, rich and poor, residents and tourists, criminals and diplomats, or even Christians and unbelievers, as the footage from Haiti so graphically illustrated. That's why the only sensible response to death's inevitability is to prepare for eternity now while we are yet alive. And for those of us who believe Jesus' claims about being the way to Heaven, we know that receiving Him as Savior and Lord is only way to truly triumph over death.