

Hebrews 2:10-18

Are you afraid of **death**? For most people, death conjures, up all sorts of **horrible** images in their minds. They equate death with **darkness** - with **pain** - and with **evil**. Death is the point of **no return**. Every year on Good Friday, our world pauses to remember the death of **Jesus**, our **Savior**. The crown of **thorns**, the **nails** piercing His flesh, the numbing **pain**, the punishing **thirst**, and worst of all the soul-stabbing **agony** of being left all alone to struggle with **demons** as He bore the sins of the **world** in total **darkness** on the cross - all of these things make for a very **dramatic** and **frightening** event. At the same time, they also illustrate a harsh **reality**. Death was **not kind** to Jesus, and yet, those events were all a part of **God's plan**. Our text begins, "*Certainly it was fitting for **God** (the one **for** whom and **through** whom everything exists), in leading **many sons** to glory, to bring the author of their **salvation** to his **goal** through **sufferings**."* God allowed death to be **merciless** to **Jesus**, so what might He allow death to do to **us**, His **brothers**? The thought is pretty **scary** to say the least. However, we need to remember that the things which **death** did to **Jesus** are **nothing** compared to what **Jesus** did to **death**. So, today we're going to take a look at the **good** side of death, as we learn that in **Jesus**, we **Live Free From The Fear Of Death**.

Exactly what did Jesus **do** to death while He hung on the cross? Our text tells us, "*Since the children share **flesh** and **blood**, he also shared the **same** flesh and blood, so that **through death** he could **destroy** the one who had the **power** of death (that is, the **Devil**)." On Good Friday, Jesus **destroyed** the one who holds the **power** of death. That was totally the **right** thing to do, because if you stop and **think** about it, **death** is not our biggest **problem** - **sin** is. And sin in turn was instigated by the **Devil**. So, when Jesus came to **rescue** us, He dealt with death merely as a **symptom**. His **real** assault was against **sin** and its **originator**, the **Devil**. Jesus handled sin by keeping all of God's laws **perfectly**, and then making Himself **liable** for all of the world's **failed** efforts to live perfect lives. In other words, Jesus took on **Himself** the punishment for all of our **sins**. Jesus **defeated** the Devil by exposing Himself to Satan's most **severe** temptations, and his most **galling** sneers, and **overcoming** them during His crucifixion. This was a very **difficult** task. In Psalm 22, the Holy Spirit describes the **anguish** of Jesus as He goes into battle against the Devil and his cohorts with these words, "*Many bulls surround me. **Strong** bulls from Bashan **encircle** me. **Enemies** open their mouths wide against me, like a **lion** that tears its prey and roars. Like water I am **poured out**. All my bones are **pulled apart**. My heart has become like **wax**. It has **melted** in the middle of my chest. My strength is **dried up** like broken pottery, and my tongue is stuck to the roof of my mouth. You lay me in the dust of **death**."**

In spite of the **difficulty** of this task, Jesus would have to face it with no **supporting cast**. He would have to withstand these temptations **all alone**. His followers had **deserted** Him and fled. And because on the cross Jesus took on the identity of the **sins** of the world, even **God the Father** turned away from Him in disgust, as the words of Jesus from the cross make painfully **clear**. Yet, Jesus met His challenge **successfully**. At the conclusion of the three hours of mid-day darkness, Jesus declared, "*It is **finished**.*" The work which He had set out to do, had been **completed** - the power of the Devil had been **destroyed**.

In the Book of Revelation, St. John used some very powerful **language** to describe this victory. He wrote, "*I saw an **angel** (ie. Jesus) coming down from heaven. He had the key to the **abyss** (ie. hell) and a great **chain** in his hand. He **seized** the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the **Devil and Satan**, **bound** him for a thousand years, threw him into the **abyss**, **locked** it, and set a **seal** on it, so that he could no longer **deceive** the nations.*" Jesus, through His triumph on the cross, made Satan a **prisoner** in his own dark kingdom.

Jesus has provided us with a **cure** for the disease of sin - **rescue** from the power of the Devil - and **Freedom From The Fear Of Death**. Stop and think about it. If you've been inflicted with some terrible form of **cancer**, but your doctor has a sure-fire **cure** for it - you don't really need to be **afraid** of the disease anymore, do you? Or, if you receive in the mail a big **bill** for something, but you've already saved up the money to **pay** the bill, it shouldn't **frighten** you, should it? In the same way, since Jesus **conquered** death and brought it under His **control** by paying the debt which we owed because of our sin - therefore, we no longer have any reason to be **afraid**, even when the pale and gaunt figure of the grim **reaper** stares us directly in the face. By destroying the **power** of the Devil, Jesus set us **Free From The Fear Of Death**.

Nevertheless, a fear of death is still very **common** - even among Christians. In many ways our fear of death is very similar to a child's fear of a dark **basement** or **attic**. Do you **remember** those fears? Do you remember **avoiding** certain places because you suspected that someone or something **bad** was waiting for you there? Do you remember asking your father or mother to go down into the basement **with** you? Do you remember asking someone to turn on a **light** in order to help soothe some of your anxieties? Well, whether you remember those fears or **not**, children **have** such fears because darkness is an **unknown** quantity. We **fear** what we do not **know** - we **fear** what we cannot **see**. And that's where **Jesus**

comes in. Jesus has taken **away** the fear of death, by encountering it **for** us, and then showing us that like a **toothless** dog, its **bark** is worse than its **bite**.

In fact, Jesus shows us that encountering death **isn't** like entering into the dark **unknown** at all. Instead, it's far more like walking through the front door of our **home**, and that's not threatening at all, is it? **Soldiers** can hardly **wait** to leave the battlefield and go **home**. **College** students count the days until they can leave the dorm and go **home** for Easter break. During the time which Jesus spent here on the earth, completing the assignment which the Heavenly Father had given to Him, Jesus **also** looked forward to the joys and comforts of His **heavenly home**. Why should **we** be any **different**? Because Jesus did His work **completely** and **perfectly** - washing away our sins and cleansing us with His own **blood** - you and I can also look **forward** to going to our **heavenly home** - even though we've never **been** there before, and even though we have to pass through the door of **death** in order to get there.

How is it possible for us to **feel** that way? Maybe I can illustrate it for you with a little **story**. Back in the days when small-town doctors still routinely made house calls, a local physician was called to the bedside of a man who was **dying**. The patient asked his doctor what **death** would be **like**? That's a pretty tough question. But as the doctor was pondering what he would say, he heard some **scratching** at the door of the room, and **that** gave him his answer. He said, "Do you hear that **noise**? That's my **dog**. He **walked** here with me, but I left him **downstairs**. He **climbed** the stairs because he knows **I'm** up here. That dog has **no idea** what this room is **like** because he's never **been** here before. All he knows is that **I'm** in here, and that's **good enough** for him. You and I **don't know** what it will be like to walk through the door of **death**. But we **do** know that our **Savior** is already on the other side - and **that** should be **good enough** for us.

My dear friends, death was **not kind** to our Lord Jesus - and it may attempt to treat **us** in much the same way. But what death did to Jesus is **nothing**, compared to what **Jesus** did to **death**. Jesus **destroyed** death, so that we, through **faith** in Jesus, may now live our lives **Free From The Fear Of Death**. Amen.