

Week of October 28-November 4

NO LONGER AFRAID

Scripture Reading: Read Hebrews 2

Years ago, there was a show on television called, "Touched by an Angel." The theology of the show was sometimes suspect, but overall it portrayed faith in God in a positive fashion (which is unusual for a television show). Based on the letters the producer and actors received, the series often had a positive impact on the kingdom. The premise of the show was that a team of angels would be assigned to help an individual who was at a crossroads or going through a crisis in their life by bringing guidance and messages from God. One of the characters on the show was the Angel of Death, played by John Dye (no pun intended). He recounted in an interview that he caused quite a stir one time when he boarded an airplane on his way to the studio in Salt Lake City. One of the passengers became more than a little nervous that she would be flying with the Angel of Death and asked if she could get off the plane!

For Christians, there is no need to fear death since Jesus has defeated it through his death and resurrection. This is the point the author of Hebrews makes in today's chapter reading: "*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*"

As a pastor for almost 30 years now, I have seen firsthand the difference knowing Christ makes when a person faces death. One case stands out in particular. I was called to the Intensive Care Unit of our local hospital to attend to a patient who was quite ill. The doctors were considering placing him on a respirator and he was frightened. I could see it in his eyes. I held his hand and quietly prayed for him as doctors and nurses moved around the room. The Lord had mercy and his oxygen levels returned to normal. I came back to see him again a few days later. He had been moved to a private room. He and I chatted for a while and I shared with him the gospel of Jesus. I prepared to leave and he asked me to pray with him. He was ready to receive Christ as Savior. His wife came in after I left and reported to me later that she could tell something had happened in her husband's life. She could see it in his eyes and hear it in his voice.

Over the next year or so, he was hospitalized several more times but there was no longer any fear when I visited him. Jesus had rescued this gentleman from his slavery to the fear of death. He had come to know the one who declared to the apostle John in Revelation 1:17-18, "*Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*" When he finally died, he slipped from this world to an eternity with Christ.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Rent the Touched by an Angel episode, "Into the Light", make some popcorn, grab a cup of hot chocolate and enjoy the show. It's a wonderful and touching episode that illustrates the power of grace, the reality of hell and the transformation that Christ brings to a person's life. Afterwards, give God thanks that he has beaten the devil and overcome death so you no longer need to be a slave to fear.

Take-a-way: *For a Christian, death is no longer an event to be feared but a doorway to eternity with Christ.*