

“The House Beyond the Sun: Awe, Here, Now, Becoming”

Psalm 32:1-7 (NIV)

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Death is not an enemy; death is a teacher reminding us to live in the present to make choices that evidence that we humans are fundamentally good. Our good acts not only bring deep satisfaction to our being, but they also benefit the community. Death is a call to love, have compassion and cooperate to bring ourselves excellent satisfaction. Psalm 32:1-7 affirms that the past is gone, and there is nothing we can do about it except welcome the lessons we learned from what happened. We choose to convince ourselves what pain from the past we want to carry in the present that will mortify our days. We can choose to live in the past, but Psalm 32 proclaims liberation from our past transgressions, so we can love ourselves and begin to live in the present and prepare to die well.

What does it mean to die well?

To find out, let us invite death into our conversation. Let us hear what death has to say:

Death teaches us that we all will soon, or later, must move to the home beyond the sun, to the peace that surpasses all understanding. But while we are not dead, we are alive and must make the best of our present. Yes, we are alive, and we get to participate in the miracle of life on this beautiful blue planet, which is located in that sweet spot in the universe where we are not too far from our star, the sun, not too close. That is all we have, our present; at this very moment, we are alive, which is an essential realization.

Death teaches us to live in AWE precisely because life is a miracle, it is beautiful, but it comes with pains because it is not perfect.

Death teaches us that we must be willing to welcome both the good and the bad of life. There is no such thing as a perfect life, but there is a fun, fascinating process of becoming, unveiling, and discovering. Today, we are well, but tomorrow we can get sick; But as long as I am alive, my whole being will fight to get better, to heal. That is why it is so important to eat well in the present, to prepare our bodies to fight when we get sick.

Death teaches us that we must not wait. Death is constantly saying, and it is time, do not wait. The time is now: Why wait for Christmas to take that beautiful China set and celebrate? How can you be sure that you make it to Christmas? You may not make it until then! Today is the day to have a party with the ones we love because we are alive. It is time to laugh, cry and let go, dance, embrace, say I love you, hug and feel the life of those we love. It is time to be kind, and it is time to cooperate to be compassionate, especially with ourselves.

Death teaches us that wholeness does not mean perfection. We are OK. That is the way we are. We are not perfect. Why are we trying to perfect the house? The perfect relationship? The perfect hair? The perfect child? The perfect job? What is the ideal moment to retire? Wholeness does not mean perfection: Enjoy who you are. Let us enjoy who we are!

I invite you to consider that life organically carries grief because of love: Sometimes, our world is upside down. We get angry at the government's incompetent responses because we love democracy.

Death teaches us that when we want perfection, our mind tends to imagine the worst-case scenarios and become ill, and suffering takes over. The future is uncertain, and there is a perceived loss of safety. We know that some of the losses are temporary, but it doesn't feel that way. All these reactions to failure are faces of grief. We must grieve because we are alive. To grieve well is to live well and prepare to die well. Let us mourn our losses, knowing that doing so will make our living in the present spectacular.

Grief is the most human of experiences. When we do not grieve, we hardly exist. Verse 5 of Psalm 32 states: Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Notice it is not displaying my sins. It is saying my lack of acknowledgment that I am human and thus I can be whole but not perfect.

Death is a great teacher, inviting us to love, love, love, love, to love is to live well, but eventually, love becomes a loss, and then we must grow up and welcome grief.

We might wish to transcend grief. Some say, "Just let go," But there is no letting go until there is letting in and surrender to the loss. It is the time! Death teaches us to welcome all of life.

In our Christian tradition and recognizing that Black Life Matters, Howard Thurman understood the heart of Christian spirituality as surrender to God, which paradoxically opens our lives up to a greater freedom that we could not otherwise have imagined:

I surrender myself to God without any conditions or reservations. I shall not bargain with [God]. I shall not make my surrender piecemeal, but I shall lay bare the very center of me, that all of my same beings shall be charged with God's creative energy. Little by little, or vast area by vast area, my life must be transmuted into the life of God. As this happens, I come into the meaning of true freedom, and the burdens that I seemed unable to bear are floated in the current of the life and love of God. When we turn toward our losses, loving attention melts our well-constructed defenses and invites pain into our hearts.

Then, healing begins. Grief can open us to profound insights and gratitude. It teaches us to live well, to love and be a better human being. We are not victims. We can calm ourselves. We can come into the present. We can resource our innate compassion. We can make wise choices. We can feel deeply, and we can share grief with others. We will survive, we are becoming, of course, we are, it is unveiling, it is the time: To live well is to die well. Let us ALL make it happen!

This my beloveds this is The Word of God for All, Glory be to God! Amen.

In Love, Compassion and Cooperation,
Pastor Mario