

I've been thinking a lot about death lately. I know that's a strange thing to admit. Death isn't something we openly discuss that often, but perhaps it ought to be – not to be morbid or morose, but to be honest.

Let's face it, death is a reality that all of us have experienced in some way or another.

Death is one of the few facts of life that every living being shares. It is one of the few things that unites us so intimately with one another. It is one of the few things that all of humanity hold in common, regardless of location in time, space or society.

Death is a force with the power to change our lives completely. When it finds us, we often become overwhelmed by grief or fear. Death changes our perception of the world around us. It changes how we see ourselves. It changes our relationships.

Death is a powerful thing, and a part of life that has always been a mystery to confound us – and in the mystery of it, it becomes a beautiful thing.

I imagine no greater fear or mystery has so invoked the human imagination. In its struggle to deal with and to understand death, human beings have been driven to the questions that nurture a deep sense of spirituality. So involved is death in shaping our spiritual quest(s), that we might even say it is by the power of death that faith lives.

I am not saying that faith only exists in the human heart/mind/soul because of death and our experience with it. (I do believe there is a divine component in our receiving the gift of faith.) Nonetheless, the mystery, the pain and all of those difficult questions that death brings to our lives, seem to be at the heart of just about all religious and spiritual discernment.

I can only speak to this as a Christian, but for me, and for all who share my faith, the questions and the struggle with death is a primary concern in the story of our people.

A recurring theme in scripture is of God's people struggling to live. Sometimes the struggle is due to oppression from others. Sometimes the struggle is from within. Either way, they are time and again threatened by the power of certain death. Sometimes it is a physical death. Other times it is a religious/spiritual/cultural one...and as the story often goes, in their struggle, they cry out. Their cries and their questions and their fears of death are felt by God, and God answers with love and mercy.

God answers with life.

This arch of the story of God's people is a hopeful thing. It reminds us that while death remains a force in our lives with the power to change us and challenge us, there is another force greater yet: the love and the mercy of God. There is the power of God's answer of life.

I don't expect a brief article like this to undue the wounds that death has caused in your life. I imagine my own wounds will remain intact for years to come. Death remains painful for us all, and ever so present at times in our lives.

I do hope, however, that in your times of pain – in your struggles with death changing your life and your reality so completely – you would cry out and remember God's timeless answer of love and mercy. I hope that in the struggle of a life so affected by the reality of death, you would know by faith that even in death, there is new life. Always.

Grace and peace to you all, and hope in God's promise of love and life.