

I've often wondered why we haven't sold more cemetery plots. Do you think you won't need it? Or course some have one elsewhere or plan to be buried elsewhere, but for the rest? Cemeteries have an uncanny ability to reveal what matters. And the younger the deceased, the more foolish the advice and wisdom of man. Parent's worse nightmare, weeping over a coffin that holds their dearest treasure in the world, only a fool would walk up, put his arm around them, say, "Look on the bright side" or "It could've been worse" or "at least you have other kids" Even to say, they're in a better place, offers no relief. There's no bright side when a child is gunned down, or commits suicide, or dies in an accident. Or like Jairus in the Gospel. Nothing worse than burying a child.

I've often thought that all religious, philosophical, relationship discussions would go much better if they took place in the cemetery. Let's all gather round an open grave, pull up a chair, and discuss the meaning of life. What is life all about? And think about why you act as you do; treat those we love, the way we do. Why we waste the time we've been given with selfish pursuits. There's nothing like a deep grave to cut through all the shallowness of man and yearning, looking for truth and life and forgiveness and joy -which can only found in one man.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The prophet Jeremiah wrote those words, that lesson, written amidst horrific carnage. the majestic city of Jerusalem, the glorious, God-designed Temple leveled by King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonians. Many of your family and friends lay dead or hauled off into exile, slavery, never to see again. Dark days, life never the same again, lives in ruin and still to confess, **the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.**

They had turned against the Lord, repeatedly wouldn't listen, fallen so far. now it must have seemed God had abandoned His people, stopped caring. Yes, lives in ruin, dark days; but a new day would soon dawn, prove God's love and faithfulness. God brings life from death.

Another dark day, lives in ruin; Word comes, **Your daughter is dead.** Jairus must have been tempted to think Jesus didn't care, his prayers ignored, yet he believed. When they arrived, everyone mourning, weeping. Jesus said, **Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.** They ridiculed, mocked Him for something that seemed so foolish, insensitive. Ridicule, mocking has always followed our Lord, His Word, His people.

Life is filled with dark days, ruin, tragedy, "life never the same again" moments. Pray God would strengthen your faith, be emptied of your false sense of security, of yourself. Your Lord speaks also to you, **Do not fear, only**

believe. When your prayers seemly go unanswered. **Do not fear, only believe.** When you face all the uncertainty in your days. When the doctor tells you there is nothing they can do. **Do not fear, only believe.** When you stand at the grave of your departed loved one, you miss so much.

Even as adults, our desires for this life are pretty simple, though we often can't see them for the clutter of our entertainment, our endless quest to never be bored. All we want is: our beloved to love us; our children to outlive us; people to respect us. That's really it; in that order. I pray it be so for you, but whether life happens that way or you face life never the same again moments or die alone -**do not fear, only believe. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness, compassion according to the abundance of his love.** He makes all things new.

The child is not dead but asleep. Do you grasp the depth of that? Spoken by the Creator of the universe, Almighty God Himself, death is nothing more than sleep for his children (who's afraid of going to sleep) These are words from One who has conquered death for you. What Comfort!

What parent would not trade their life for their child's and die in their place. That you would not die, Christ took your place. Death is not natural. He did not create us to die. By grace, you won't - ever. For no one who believes in Him, who trusts in the merits of His suffering, death, and resurrection, who rests in the mercy of the Almighty, will ever die. Believers don't die. They fall asleep. Their souls go to heaven, embracing their Lord and loved ones, while their bodies sleep in the grave, waiting resurrection. And one day, when He's finished His work in this world, He'll come again to empty every cemetery with a blast of a trumpet.

Here is power for life. There is no circumstance in your lives He is unaware of or unable to help. There is no such thing as an impossible situation for your heavenly Father. He has promised to work for your good. His Words still have power, beyond all human reasoning, to bind up your wounds even more they are life-giving, resurrecting even for stagnate, cold, despairing faith.

This is your truth, His truth. The worst of your sin, your darkest desires, your pettiness, self-love, failures are no more. Forgiven. **Do not fear, only believe.**

We live by and in Grace. Our God lives, dwells among His people; He calls you by name, His address of affection, like that girl 'daughter' 'son.' His bleeding, His dying, His rising, His cross and flesh joined to you -these are the things that make us Christians and declare us alive. Thus we have the strength to carry on. Trust Jesus each day, especially 'life will never be the same again moments', in dark days and ruin and in the hour of your death. Death has been defeated. **Do not fear. Only believe.**