

Termination Day

I have an edge, a periphery, if you please, on life, for I have been diagnosed as having terminal cancer, limiting my life span from a human, carnal point of view. I will come to one grand finale...my earthly swan song in the not so distant future.

What makes this so puzzling to most humans is that they immediately become remorseful for the one in this condition. I suppose it's because they think a persons' life has been shortened, cut off in their prime, so to speak. How sad! These short sighted, myopic mortals had better put on their introspective glasses and look into themselves long and searchingly, and understand that all life is terminal. Be realistic! Our terminal day starts the day we are born into the family of mankind. Everyone and everything must die, to breathe one's last, if that is more palatable then the feared word "death".

But we don't "breathe one's last fleeting breath." There is something more. There is a choice to make a while there is still time. We are not guaranteed to live from one moment to another. You cannot get that kind of guarantee anywhere! Lives are snuffed out at the strangest and most inopportune times. Think about it. It could be you and it will be you...sometime. If you have shoved the word "death" into the recesses of your mind, it's time to bring it out into full focus. Just what makes you think you are going to live to eighty or ninety? And so what if you do? The actual fact remains that someday you will die. All the cemeteries in the world bear out this singular statistic. Are you any different? What make you even have the possible fanciful notion that you are immortal? May I say, Humbug?"

But let me digress. From the time I was a little child of eight, I knew that there was a God...somewhere...out there...that had control of everything. Even then, all I had to do was go out on a starlit night and I realized that those stars and that shining moon just couldn't happen to be there all on their own. There was a complex and intricate design and purpose to it all. Now my small mind didn't come up with any grand theories or concepts, but there was something that was inbuilt in my conscience that made me realize the truth that God exists...out there...somewhere.

It was at this time in my life when thoughts of dying invaded my mind. Due to my sketchy and pieced together Sunday School teachings, I realized there were two different places to go after a person died, heaven or hell. What they didn't tell me in Sunday School and what I didn't know was how I could get to heaven. So every night I would pray to God...who was out there...somewhere...my "Now I lay me down to sleep..." you know the rest of it. The point is, each night I would say this prayer, but I never knew if I had been good enough to go to heaven or bad enough to go to hell. I was always left hanging in limbo. What torment! And this continued nightly up to the age of twenty-four when the miracle occurred.

In between those years I became a very moral and (self) righteous individual, trying my best to live a good clean life to gain favor with God...who was out there...somewhere. But each night as I lay on my bed, the torment of “not knowing” would return to haunt my soul.

During this interim, I did come to really understand that God did create everything and there could be no possible room for evolution. God was who He was. If He said so in His word, it was so. I had read the first few chapters of Genesis on creation and they made more sense to me than anything I had read or heard of up to this time. I also knew somewhat about Jesus, His Son, who died on the cross for our sins. The problem being, I had no idea what this really meant. The most I could conclude was that if you confessed your sins each day, that Jesus would forgive you, if you did this each day...but then what? There just wasn't any assurance in this at all for me. I still didn't know whether I had been bad enough to go to hell or good enough to go to heaven...I was basing everything on my works, whether good or bad.

Then came the time, in the twenty-fourth year of my life, that changed me forever. I began bumping into people who kept asking me if I was “born again” or “did I have Jesus as my Savior”. I had no idea what these terms meant, so I would tell these people how moral I was and that I was as good, if not even better, than the person down the street. I must have emitted a very unsavory self-righteous aroma. To go on, there was a little Baptist church just down the block from us in North Bend, Oregon. I would take Doug, my first born and then two years old, out for a ride in his stroller each day. One day, passing the church, I noticed a big banner covering the front of the church that simply read “Special Meetings”. I came home and asked my husband, “What in the world are special meetings?” Now, my husband, who just happened to be one of those “born again” persons, told me that these meetings were to tell people about God and Jesus. Nothing more was said, he played it really smart, but the next day I suggested we both go and see what' going on. I thought it was my naturally curious mind that made me want to go, but when I looked back in retrospect after “the miracle”, I realized that God's Person, called the Holy Spirit, was leading me there...by the nose.

So we went and sat towards the back of this small church and everyone carried a bible and sang hymns, most of which were very unfamiliar to me. The minister spoke on being born again, that you had to ask Jesus into your heart and make it a personal thing...instead of a God...somewhere...out there. He explained what Jesus dying on the cross really meant, that He died for all my past, all my present, and all my future sins, they were all taken care of at the cross. All I had to do was believe that this was so because God can't lie and I would be assured of my special place in heaven. Works didn't count, for how can we even begin to measure up to God's pure, holy and sinless standards. It took Jesus to do that. This was all new to me.

We probably went back to these meeting four more times. Something was happening! There was a great unrest inside of me. As I was hanging up the laundry outside, the day seemed so gray. In

fact, everything seemed to appear as a black and white TV to me. At that instant, I said to God, "If what I have heard and read about You these past days are true, then please come into my heart now." Instantly color returned to my life and I knew that finally I belonged to the family of God. I was a full-fledged member. I belonged to Him and Heaven would be my final destination. No more torment, I knew from that moment on that God did save me and that He keeps me. No more trying to work myself up the ladder to God...who had been...out there...somewhere...but that He accepted me just the way I was and simply because I believed His promise that Jesus died on the cross for me personally. From that time on I knew that heaven was my destination and I could hardly wait for that great awakening. This is "the miracle". Death holds no more fear. Jesus freed me from its grasp.

You, too, can break way from the fear of death. Jesus wants you. He's waiting for you this very moment to make a commitment to Him. Realize that He did die for you personally on the cross to rescue you from the pits of hell. And there is a hell you know, the Bible mentions it over and over again, with Satan (and believe it, there is a Satan) as head honcho. Just where do you think all your fears come from and all your lofty and self-appointed ideologies and vain philosophies come from? Satan would have you think it's your intellect, he will do anything to keep you from Jesus and I'm speaking from experience. That is why I took the time to tell you the truth, in sketch form, about my own life, knowing that you can relate to the same fears I had, if you will be honest with yourself.

So what's holding you back from asking Jesus into your heart...right now...this moment? Why delay? You've got nothing to lose but your own future life. Just ask, from your heart, for Jesus to save you, for God reads the sincerity of our hearts.

There is no cost, no down payment, no interest charges, it's free for the taking. Where can you ever find a better deal?

This is why I have no fear of dying. I have an edge on most people. I always knew that I would die someday, but when the medical reports told me that I had terminal cancer, I almost leapt for joy, knowing that at last I would be going home, to the real world, within a limited amount of time. The time that God now leaves me here I can really live for His glory and telling others about Jesus is such an unbelievable privilege in the meantime.

Termination Day will finally be my Graduation Day!

Iva Firsching '91