



Funeral Elements

John 5:28-29 -- Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall bear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Introduction

1. If they could, most people would fight shy of funerals. Some reasons are understandable: They really don't want to see the deceased if it is an open casket; they don't want to hear a long sermon by the preacher; or hear someone being lied about.
2. Further, sometimes the way funerals are handled can either be pointless (and therefore time wasting) or down right barbaric, especially if you are dealing with thoughtless funeral personnel.
3. What we hope to do in this lesson is look at some basic principles that we are to derive from attendance at such a function and the benefits that are designed to come forth from properly conducted services.

A. Closure and Introspection

1. For individuals with no religious bent to their lives, psychologists would explain a funeral as an event of "closure." It is a way people can put a period to a chapter of life and so begin to move on with their course of living.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 -- Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

2. With all that takes place in the funeral event it is hoped that some sort of "introspection" will take place by the circumstances and a certain "awakening" occur to the direction and ultimate goal of one's own life, along with some awareness of basic realities.
3. One such reality is that we all have an appointment with death ordained by God, and that a funeral, or "house of mourning" as the Ecclesiastic writer describes it, is something set up to get us to think.
4. If it is a graveside service, some unexpected things may occur from the presence of the gravestones. One is the evidence of the number of them. It gets across the fact that people do die - as we all. Then as someone recently noted: many of those laid to rest die younger than those of us still living.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-27 -- There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – A time to be born, and a time to die...

Ecclesiastes 7:2-5 -- It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure. It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man than for one to listen to the song of fools.

5. Appropriately a funeral is to get one to think about God, that we will one day see Him, and to think about the life we will be presenting to Him.

James 4:13-15 -- Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit."... You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."

Psalms 90:12 -- So teach us to number our days, that we may present to [God] a heart of wisdom.

B. Honoring, Remembering and Mourning

1. There are those who have served God well all their lives and their lives are immortalized in the Bible: Daniel, Josiah, John the Baptist, Paul, those of Hebrews 11.

2. But the Bible also preserves the lives of the Jezebels, Ahabs, Judases and many kings and members of Jewish sects that failed to measure up to one extent or another. It thus begs the question: "In which list will you be found?"
3. We need to think about how we will be remembered. Have we left a legacy of truth for our relatives, friends and children or will the memorial be silent because no one could think of anything good to say, especially God?
4. It is right that we mourn the passing of a loved one, for either good or bad reasons:
 - If one is not a Christian then we need to mourn the eternal loss of their soul.
 - In such cases we need to share that loss with those closest and feel for them.
 - Even if the individual was right with God, it may be a personal loss of someone dear whose passing will leave a void in the heart or in the orderly function of life.
 - As to why we need to go through this is perhaps God wants us to feel as He feels with the loss of any soul, especially ours.

Revelation 14:13 -- And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

C. Comfort and Solace

1. The living need to know that the lives of their beloved have not come to an abrupt end in which the soul ceases to be or that it is trapped in some dark hadean limbo.
2. Rather, and especially for the Christian, life goes on and in a more glorious state of health and worth. They are with God. One of the reasons death is euphemistically called "sleep" is because that is what it literally is.

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 -- Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality..., then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

John 11:25-26 -- Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die..."

D. Motivation and Guidance

1. One of the reasons why Preachers pick the event of a funeral to preach a sermon is because God's word tells people subjects and events they normally would not hear.
2. After giving people hope that physical death is not an end to things, they need to know that there are spiritual realities that need to be understood. Spiritual death awaits most of the world, probably including them if they do not become obedient.

Hebrews 9:27-- And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of the many shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

Acts 17:30-31 -- Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [See opening passage - John 5:28-29]

3. The Bible is the guidebook and Jesus came as an example as to how to live right in obedience to our heavenly Father.
4. All of your life is preparing you for some sort of resurrection. It is time to look at your life and see if it meets God's requirements and to see if you are prepared for judgment. If you don't care.... well... it's your funeral.

E. Follow-up for the Living