

Covenant Program #3

THOUGHTS OF DEATH

Light Candle

At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.

~Albert Schweitzer

Check-in

Opening Reading:

“I told you last night that I might be gone sometime, and you said, Why, and I said To be with the Good Lord, and you said, Why, and I said, Because I’m old, and you said, I don’t think you’re old. And you put your hand in my hand and you said, You aren’t very old, as if that settled it. I told you you might have a very different life from mine, and from the life you’ve had with me, and that would be a wonderful thing, there are many ways to live a good life. And you said, Mama already told me that. And you said, Don’t laugh! Because you thought I was laughing at you. You reached up and put your fingers on my lips and gave me that look that I never in my life saw on any other face besides your mother’s. It’s a kind of furious pride, very passionate and stern. I’m always a little surprised to find my eyebrows unsinged after I’ve suffered one of those looks. I will miss them. It seems ridiculous to suppose the dead miss anything. If you’re a grown man when you read this – it is my intention for this letter that you will read it then – I’ll have been gone a long time. I’ll know most of what there is to know about being dead, but I’ll probably keep it to myself. That seems to be the way of things.”

From Gilead by Marilynne Robinson

“The pace of our lives is so hectic that the last thing we have time to think of is death. We smother our fears of impermanence surrounding ourselves with more and more goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, only to find ourselves their

slaves... Our only aim in life soon becomes to keep everything as safe and secure as possible. When changes do happen, we find the quickest remedy, some slick and temporary solution. And so our lives drift on, unless a serious illness or disaster shakes us out of our stupor... No one talks about death and no one talks about the afterlife, because people are made to believe that such talk would only thwart our so-called “progress” in the world.”

*From The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying
by Sogyal Rinpoche*

“What would we cherish were it forever? Would we hold babies so close with such heart-wringing fervor if we knew they would retain that wonderful smell and smooth skin and endearing embrace forever? Spring forever, without the bracing frame of fall would not charm us. If we can grow bored or weary in a world of such delights, granted for such a brief time, what would we make of eternity? All of this reasoning does not dismiss our hopes. We still would choose more – more time, more life, more love. Immortality must be good, claimed the Greek poet Sappho or why would the Gods choose it? We cannot still the longing for more.”

From Making Loss Matter by Rabbi David Wolpe

1. Do you think about, contemplate your own death?
2. If not, what might be the implications for ignoring thoughts of your death? If so, how does thinking about your death impact your life?
3. What are your current thoughts about life after death?

Reflective Silence~

- Discussing the Questions~

Business

Check-out

(Closing Reading on next page)

Closing Reading~

“I am not ready to die,
But I am learning to trust death
As I have trusted life.
I am moving
Toward a new freedom
Born of detachment,
And a sweeter grace~
Learning to let go.

I am not ready to die
But as I approach sixty
I turn my face toward the sea,
I shall go where tides replace time,
Where my world will open to a far horizon
Over the floating, never-still flux and change.
I shall go with the changes,
I shall look far out over golden grasses
And blue waters.

There are no farewells.

Praise God for His mercies,
For His austere demands,
For His light
And for His darkness.

Excerpt from Gestalt At Sixty by May Sarton

Extinguish candle