

INTERMENT

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It's easy to suppose that we stand here at the end of a life to pay our "final respects" at a "final resting place." Existence appears to be over because life is over. What remains seems to be dealing with the impact on us who remain. The happiness of good memories combines with the sadness of losing the source of that happiness. Sunshine on this cold winter's day pictures our conflicted feelings. We have only to wait till time turns the winter of our loss to the summer of new things to come in life.

But most of us are not satisfied with such a take on what we're experiencing here today. It seems too impersonal, too "objective" to cover the way we feel. The complete picture is what we know and what we feel. A long time ago Solomon said that God has planted eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That sentiment feels like our lack of ability to imagine not existing. At the very least, it fits with not wanting to cease existing.

Words about such a later time help to the extent that we are inclined to believe the one who said them. It's more helpful, though, to have an example who came back from "the other side." That would confirm to us that there is "a beyond" that's beyond what we can experience now. In the Christian view of things, we have in scripture some examples of "resurrection." Those are examples of returning from beyond the grave. In particular, we look to our Lord's resurrection as the main case in point.

But more important than words and examples is his promise of our own resurrection. It's a promise to us who choose to wear his name, and commit ourselves to living here as he taught us: intentionally living in love toward him and each other.

"Don't worry," Christ said; "you believe in God; believe in me as well. There are many rooms in my Father's house. If it weren't so, I would've told you, because I'm going to get a place ready for you. If I do that, I'll come back and get you so you can be where I am" (John 14:1-3a).

We comfort one another with these words from the One who came back from beyond and promised hope for us, a hope beyond the place and time for each of us that will be like the one we're witnessing here today.

Virgil Warren, christir.org