

## Minister's Message – June 2013

### A Funeral and a Baby

Yesterday I was at a funeral. The dead body of my 93 year old stepmother was in the box at the front of the church. We were reminded of the life that she lived, of her good cooking and kind deeds. We were also reminded of how she came to faith in Jesus Christ late in life. Her life was nothing out of the ordinary. She was not listed in the 'Who's who' of the world. She was not rich or famous as far as the world is concerned.

What if she had been rich or famous? She might have been given a state funeral. Her death might have been headlines in the newspaper. Maybe the whole world would be in mourning for her. But when all is said and done, is there any difference between her death and the death of a queen? At death we all become equal. The dead body in the box could have been that of a queen or a prime minister rather than my stepmother. Would it make any difference to the one who is dead?

And today my granddaughter came into this world and we are so excited. We saw a tiny baby who can fit into a shoe box – almost! She cannot walk or talk – much to the consternation of her little sister. She cannot even sit up. She has made no great speeches or ruled over a kingdom as yet. She is not a queen or princess, but would she be any different if she was? Would she have entered this world in another way? Rich or poor, all are born of a woman and enter this world as helpless babies. Rich or poor, all are totally dependent on parents or guardians to feed and clothe them for many years.

A funeral one day and a birth the next. The end of a life and the beginning of a life. These are big events. Are there any bigger events than birth and death? Yet how often do we reflect on these events? How easy it is to become proud young or middle-aged individuals who think we are the centre of the world. How easily we get fixated on getting rich or famous, forgetting our humble entry into this world and our eventual departure in a box.

In the Bible we read 'Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom'. And again 'Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days' (Psalm 90:12, 39:4). If you are wise you will think about how you began life and how your life will end.

Jesus once told a story to people who loved money. The story was about a rich man and a poor man (Luke 16:19f). They both died, as we all must. When the poor man died, Jesus said, the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom – in other words heaven. The rich man, however, ended up in torment in Hades. He cried out for mercy because of the unbearable heat of this place. He was in the everlasting fires of hell. He was in the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, and would remain there for ever.

You may not believe in heaven and hell, but Jesus did. If you think you know better than the Son of God, you are a fool. If you are wise you will number your days and reflect on where you came from and where you are going. Jesus is the way to heaven; he is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father in heaven except through him (John 14:6).

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*