



into the Melting Pot

the question is more important than the answer

Sunday 11 February 2018

Life's One Certainty – Death (an open discussion)

We recognised that we have sanitised the end of life, and few people (unless it is part of their job) have much experience of death, seeing a dead body, or dealing with one - it's all done for us.

One way we keep death at arm's length is to have a wealth of euphemisms to describe it (popping your clogs, gone away, passed on, and so on) rather than being more direct with our language.

No one knows what happens when we die, other than the return of the body to the elements it came from. Anything else is a faith position, and might matter more for some than others, but we recognise that we would rather live than die, but death is inevitable. We ought to be more prepared for it and we should talk about it more easily than we do. We spoke the Baby Loss Service and bereavement support.

Most of us were happy that we live on in the legacy our life has left behind, in the people we have touched, and any influence we might have had. A life after death in any other sense was less important to us - it is our life and its purpose now - although some find a hope in a life after death (or even reincarnation) as important.

We saw that the Bible has no consistent view of death and what might follow; most of the our cultural language (hell, hades, purgatory, etc) comes from Greek thinking assimilated by the early (Catholic) church as it developed its own ideas, but then used them as part of its control over its people.

We explored a number of other aspects of death: euthanasia and assisted dying; a funeral 'service' being for the living left behind; the morality of expensive treatments for minimal life extension; the environmental aspects of dying (burial vs cremation); preparing a living will and planning for death; hospice care; the practice of praying for the dead; inequality in death (as in life) due to (financial) circumstances; litigation culture. One aspect we didn't get around to was exploring the cost of dying; perhaps we might follow up on this another time.

What we did resolve after all this was to consider

- having in place an up-to-date will
- ensuring financial arrangements are clear following our own death, by collecting information together on pension arrangements, bank and savings accounts, mortgage, insurances policies, etc
- managing our digital legacy by listing all our internet accounts (email, social media, banks, utilities, shopping, memberships, etc) each with usernames and passwords, and keeping in a secure place
- making a 'living will' regarding resuscitation, medication pathways and so on, and considering being an organ donor
- having clear wishes about our own funeral arrangements, possibly having already made pre-paid plans
- preparing our own 'funeral service' and thus removing that pressure from those bereaved