

Dear Co-Laborer,

A House of Death

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”
(Jeremiah 8:20)

Last year was a time of many challenges and changes for Leette and me as we moved into Hoosier Village Retirement Center November 9th. We begin in independent living, when needed to assisted living, and then into end of life. The following are some observations.

Fall is in the air, the trees are bare, the weather is cold, and we are entering into winter. The weather is a parable of life: here in the village the spring and summer of life have ended; people move here in the fall of life, awaiting winter when life is no more. We do not move to such a facility en route somewhere else. We come preparing to die. It matters not how we have lived our lives, we all come to die.

Before coming, each person has the painful task of sorting through what has been collected through the years. Some possessions are given to the children and grandchildren. Some are given to friends, and some are sold. The rest is trashed. Only the most prized possessions are brought here, and even these will be with us for only a short while. When we die, that which we thought was so precious will be sold for pennies on the dollar. I think it was Mark Twain who said, “Your funeral is where they mourn you for an hour and forget you forever.” How sad it is to invest in the temporal.

The setting in the village is beautiful. Everything is first class. The staff is unfailingly helpful and friendly, the food delicious, and the comforts and amenities are all designed to help forget that this is the end of the road. We have all the trappings to help forget and postpone the inevitable. The schedule is full of a plethora of activities to occupy the time of those who wish to participate. We eat healthy food, swallow pills, and workout in a well-equipped gym; all to no avail. Nobody escapes the grim reaper. The house of death is a wonderful reminder.

In Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer He said to the Father, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). As we approach death, these are the two questions that will determine our eternal destiny: have I glorified the Father, and have I finished the work He gave me to do?

Most refuse to think about death, much less ask themselves these questions. We had dinner with a sweet lady in her nineties, and I asked her if she knew the Savior. She responded in the affirmative, assuring me that she was a good Methodist and never smoked or drank. Before I could pursue the issue further, she talked on about her church and life, and soon the topic was completely lost.

Because of Christ, living here is not depressing. Even though, in all probability we will spend the remainder of our days here, we have not retired; we are actively involved in the lives of people every bit as much as before we moved: regular Bible studies with various groups of men, speaking at conferences via the internet, and an occasional trip. Thus, Leette and I are not discouraged or morose. We are, however, sobered by the reality of life. I find it quite sad mingling with these pleasant people whose lives, for the most part, are vacuous. They move from the fall of life into the winter without a valid, biblical hope. It is hard for people who have lived 70-90 years of their lives outside of Christ to admit they made a mistake. As God brings us to mind, pray that we will be faithful in sharing the claims of Christ.

Rejoicing in the hope of His return,

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