

MARK'S REMARKS

Reading through the newspaper recently, I was stopped short as I noticed the birth, wedding and the obituary sections residing next to, if not actually flowing into each other. I first noticed there were no pictures in the birth announcement section of this edition. Factual informative words were all that introduced me to this new member of the human race as I read about the date and location of birth, weight, length, name of child, name of parent(s), and name of grandparent(s).

However, large and numerous photos occupied the wedding announcement section. While words communicated the facts of each, the photos were the focus. Each portrayed two people, both smiling, always standing close, all holding hands. Excited new beginnings, joy, love, protection, and respect were communicated. Yet there was something more. Togetherness, that's what it was. These individuals were not alone.

That is why the photos in the wedding and obituary sections seemed such a contrast. The obituary photos revealed no holding of hands, no new beginnings, well not in the earthly sense, and no togetherness. While each person's short biography varied, the common ingredient was solitude. The atmosphere seemed as individual as it could get.

What struck me anew is while finding your name in a wedding announcement is not common to everyone, finding your name in a birth and death announcement is common to all. Enoch and Elijah might have something different to say, but to be in one is to be in both. And while perfectly guided and planned, each of these journeys must be traveled without the companionship of others.

While we travel through the moment of birth and death without human companions, it is a blessed person that is received and welcomed on earth with love, as is the person who finds themselves walking with, and sometimes carried by, loving companions to the river's edge. Travel companions who must let go, their time yet to come.

Gloriously and assuredly, life and death are not random because God is sovereign. He decreed the day of our births and He sustains our lives right up to the day we pass into eternity. It has been said, "We are immortal until the day God has pre-ordained for us to come home." I am grateful the Lord has made known to me the truth that our welcomes and hellos are temporary but so too with our goodbyes. We will see loved ones again.

While no earthly companion can take these first and last earthly journeys with us, the Father is always with his children. Each and every step...always...forever. He knew us before we were born and guides and directs our lives, regardless if it includes a wedding photo or not. He walks with us to the edge of the river bank and mysteriously welcomes us at the same time on the other side where complete joy, love and protection reside and where sorrows and tears have no place. My surroundings at times may communicate to me I am alone, but it simply is not true. He is always with me.

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Psalm 139:13-16

*"...he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."
Psalm 12:7, 8*

Safe and secure,

Pastor Mark