

## **On Living Forever** **Luke 13.31-35**

A new study out of Australia suggests that watching television harms one's health. Well, no surprise there but the researchers also seem to state that if you don't watch TV you might never die. One report reveals, for instance, that each hour spent in front of the tube leads to an "eleven percent increase in overall mortality." Anything over four hours per day left you "forty-six percent more likely to die." (For more details see <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/26/health/26beha.html>.)

Well, no – everyone from fit-freaks to sofa spuds has the exact same chance of death. The rate of mortality holds at a reliable one hundred percent. The Old Testament records a statistically negligible two exceptions but the number of post-mortem resuscitations scattered throughout Scripture outweigh them, resulting in a death ratio that actually exceeds one per customer. At least the first half of Hebrews 9.27 remains a scrap of Scripture verifiable to the satisfaction of the most exacting scientist.

When the Pharisees warn Jesus to light out for the territory because Boss Herod has put a price on his head, our outlaw Lord replies that he has no intention of dodging death. He insists, however, on picking his own time, his own place, and his own purpose. Not now, but on the symbolic "third day" already foreshadowed (Lk 2.46) and finally affirmed (Lk 24.21). Not on Herod's turf, but in Jerusalem where his bizarre coronation undoes earthly ideas of kingship. Not needlessly to please the whim of an uneasy monarch, but as the great Mother-Savior who hen-like hides her babies from the flames of righteous wrath.

Nothing in the Christian gospel invites us to avoid death. The cross marks the only entrance to the narrow way of Christ. "When Christ calls a man," wrote Bonhoeffer, "he bids him come and die."

Not such a bad deal, really. After all, when the doctor delivers a baby he bids it come and die. As rock legend Jim Morrison phrased it, "no one gets out of here alive." We cannot control whether. We cannot choose when. We can, however, make some choices about why and for whom.

I can forego the four hours of daily TV in order to stave off my inevitable death for an indeterminate time – and end up getting hit by a bus while jogging. Or I can invest the same seconds in some kind of kingdom service to invite eternity into my mortal minutes. I can cure and cast out in the name of Christ today and tomorrow but I cannot keep the third day from coming. What I can do is prepare to cry on that third day, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

**Step Away from the Remote Control!**

Doug