

Morgan's Moment...

According to my Baby Book
my theological questioning began
at age 2 and ½ when mom wrote:

*"We caught a mouse
in a trap in the fireplace
and Arty and I were looking at it.
"Little mousie's dead, I said..."
After a short time he said...
'Where is dead?'"*

Mom didn't answer me I guess
but simply wrote
"How would you answer that?"

I don't remember that moment...
and can't imagine
how to answer my own question.

Is dead a place...
or another state of being
or a word for absence of life?

Dead is fact as with that little mouse...
where the life cycle ends
to which there is no answer.

Humans of all times and places
have tried to answer
my mother's question.

I have a more relevant question...
posed as Jesus seemed to pose it...
"Where is alive?"

Mom focused on life here and now...
there was too much life to live...
to worry about where is dead.

Art Morgan

WHERE IS DEAD?

For All Saints Day

[Preface: Speaking of dead mice, just as I started working on this page guess what? My computer "Mouse" just died! I unscrewed it, took it all apart. It was truly dead. Where is dead?]

Remembering the dead pre-dates history. When grief is fresh who can help but remember? In fact, the dead seem close and somehow alive. Some religions, Christian included, have blurred the separation of life from death, even the living from the dead.

We were in Seattle to honor our friend and colleague, Loren Arnett. The service was held at University Christian Church, which was our home church.

The plan for the service was crafted by Loren along with his wife, June, and their pastor, Laurie Rudel. One never knows what to expect in memorial or funeral services.

Laurie pointed out how Loren enjoyed reading obituaries. Obituaries report that someone was "welcomed into the arms of Jesus," or "called home," or "reunited with loved ones," or "with their Father in Heaven," or "gone fishing," or "passed on."

Well, Loren wanted none of that. He wanted it to be said that he had died. He was dead.

Clergy have typically offered predictable "comfort texts" and recited ancient creeds at funerals and gravesides. So it was unusually fitting and appreciated to hear Laurie so gracefully present an alternative to the typical funeral message.

She did not fall back on some of the "feel good" texts so often used in funerals. The most common are those like *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever believes in me will never die."* (John 11:25, 26)

Another is also from John, *"In my Father's house are many rooms...I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am you may be also."* (John 14)

I never discussed this with Loren, but he was familiar enough with modern biblical scholarship to know that the Bible is not flat — that we can no longer say that every belief and statement has equal merit simply because it is in the Bible. Different beliefs evolved and were added to the story. The popular John talk was among last ideas offered.

Among earlier "heaven talk" attributed to Jesus are words in Matthew in the "Lord's Prayer," these also written decades after Jesus died.

*"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven."*

Note that the prayer is not a plea for entrance into some heavenly place beyond life, but is a plea for establishing the heavenly kingdom of love, peace and justice on earth. That was what Jesus was about.

Loren spent a life career bringing people together in living out the Jesus prayer on earth. So Laurie had us speak words from Jesus' bible, from Micah, that begin with the question, *"What does the Lord require of you..."* and offers the answer *"do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God."*

Just to be sure we got it right Laurie had us repeat that answer three times!

Where is dead? How would you answer?

— Art Morgan, October 2015

BOOK CORNER

"The Winemaker's Daughter" by Timothy Egan is a first novel by a Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times Correspondent.

One of the reviewers wrote:
"A page-turner that manages to avoid the trite and instead embraces truthful contemporary issues."

Those familiar with political issues in Seattle as well as eastern Washington will find the book interesting.

He tells a good story with suspense and romance as well.

Geographic details including graphic stories of fishing in Puget Sound, mountain climbing and a tragic forest fire keep the story alive.

I enjoy books that probe historic events and are set in places I know.