

**Freedom from Fear of Death**      First Week in Ordinary Time      Wednesday,  
January 14, 2015 8:15 AM **Heb 2:14-18;** Mk 1:29-39 (Jesus came into our world to show us that we have eternal life as a promise and for the present moment we have to live as fully as possible, as honestly as possible, to serve God and God's purposes regardless of the consequences.)

**“Since the children share in blood and flesh, Jesus likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.”**

**The story that science tells**, the best that science can do today, is not a very satisfying story about how **everything happens by chance**. As you probably know most scientists are atheists, meaning **they are materialists**. They think there is only the material world, although they often fantasize about aspects of the world that are surely beyond any sort of verification. Nonetheless, there are all these chance events, starting with the Big Bang that just came out of nowhere for no reason. It was a random fluctuation in the primordial vacuum, and then it developed. Eventually we have galaxies and planets and finally the earth. And then on the earth there is water, marvelous to say all by chance of course, water having marvelous properties, by chance, that allows for life to grow and wonderful properties at that, including that it expands when it freezes so that we can have lakes that are frozen on top with everything living underneath, whereas if it contracted like most other substances, then we would have dead lakes with nothing living—so remarkable! Well, the most remarkable thing of all is when all of a sudden these chemicals get together and start growing, lo and behold by accident, they want to live. In fact, they almost are programmed to survive at any cost, by chance of course. And of course, by chance, this universe has the law of conservation so that once things do pop into existence they don't pop out of existence, another remarkable coincidence! So on and on the story goes. Well, **that doesn't explain much about our existence or behavior**.

**The Letter to the Hebrews** is very different. It doesn't look at life through a lens of material reality or materiality. **It looks at life through the lens of stories that have a spiritual dimension to them**. Partly the spiritual dimension of these stories is **the existence of evil as a creature**, a creature who has turned freely away from God, a very intelligent creature without any materiality, in fact a bodiless creature: mindful, willful, soulful, spiritual, but not physical. Jesus himself referred to this being as **the father of lies**. Here the author refers to this creature as **“the one who has power of death.”** And it goes on to say that the purpose of Christ coming is to free us children of Adam from “those who through the fear of death had been subject to slavery”—**fear of death**. This is an interesting contrast to the idea of the blind will to survive. The will to survive is an instinct you might say. We would say God-given instinct, but science just says it's just there. Now the fear of death is quite different. It's not simply the desire to live. **It's the fear of losing, and it leads to slavery, bondage, a lack of freedom**.

Now this explains a great deal of human behavior. By the fear of death we bind ourselves and accept so little in life. **We give away our freedom to be who God calls us to be because we are afraid that someone has this power of death**. And very often we ascribe

that to God or to nature, although the Scriptures don't. And what is death anyway? In the thinking of this author, death is not even simply the passing away of an organism, but it's the separation of our consciousness, our mindfulness, from the light that created us and that we yearn for by God's own design. It's eternal darkness. It's eternal coldness. **It's eternal lovelessness.**

Now as we grow up even as children **we experience that love can be lost.** We experience that we are very vulnerable, that we can be hurt, that we can be neglected, that we can be bruised physically and emotionally, we can be rejected, and we can lose those who love us in their death. All of this can create a web of fear where **we are afraid we are going to lose the little we have, so we refuse really to ever take any risks.** We don't tell the truth to people we need to love us; we don't express ourselves honestly. In many ways we live half a life because we don't want to lose the little we have. That's not God's way.

**Jesus came into our world to show us that we have eternal life as a promise and for the present moment we have to live as fully as possible, as honestly as possible.** We have to do whatever we can do **to serve God and God's purposes regardless of the consequences,** regardless of who doesn't like it, regardless of who will reject us, regardless of the bruises physical and emotional they may cause. Then we will be truly alive, and we will no longer be slaves to fear. We will be free people, free men and free women, living the life we chose in service of God because **it's only the grace of God that actually frees us to serve.** People who think they are free by doing whatever they please, are still in this slavery because they don't choose what it is that pleases them. That's chosen for them and they are in bondage to it. And this is much of the world. Christ has come for freedom.