

1 PETER 4:6

⁶For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to human standards in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Sometimes we make happen the very things we most want to avoid. One thing we often fear, and yet create for ourselves, is separation. We feel distant from those who are different to us, those we consider 'other'. We feel separated from those who have gone before. Sometimes we feel separated from God. Some people we think are beyond reach. Sometimes we feel beyond reach ourselves, consumed by darkness, loneliness, and fear.

What a profound message then for us in this passage. Jesus descends into the darkness, into the places we fear most, to bring us out of death and into life. Those who are consumed by darkness hear the Good News and are brought into the glorious light of God. Those who are dead are made to live new lives, which witness to the miracles of God.

Many people may be physically alive, but they are not truly living. There are those who live submerged by circumstances, situations, and anxieties. The gospel gives people new life – God turns dead ends into turning points, rejection into acceptance, death into new life. It says that no-one is beyond redemption. There is no sin God doesn't forgive when repentance is true. Those whom we give up on, whom we consider past hope, God never stops searching for. When they are found, God celebrates: *'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep'* (Luke 15:6).

The generosity of God overflows with such power that even death is swept away. Whilst we do not fully understand the mechanisms of salvation, we are encountered by the one who gives life to the dead.

Where people turn away, God welcomes. Where we are tempted to judge, God calls us to love. When flesh inevitably dies, spirit lives. It is a call to live according to God's standards, rather than wither according to our own. Pray today for your five friends; the Spirit of the one who crosses every boundary to bring the message of His love might reach them.

As you pray for your five people today, remember this: no one is beyond the presence and promise of God.