

葬礼中的笑声

The Laughter in a Funeral



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I was a student in junior high school in Beijing when Mao Ze-Dong passed away. The government issued an order to all institutions to hold public funerals for Mao. The funeral was held in the field stadium of our school. It was a sunny and bright September morning. The campus, once noisy and pleasant, was dead silent. We were instructed far in advance by the school authority that all participants should be absolutely serious and no teasing and laughing were permitted. Offenders would be dealt with severely. I, along with my classmates, was carefully standing in line by the school gate waiting for my turn to enter the field stadium. On that day, we had no interest in teasing as we often do to pass time. Besides, it was so dull outside the school gate. I only saw a horse-driven cart parked nearby. But suddenly, the horse started sneezing and got louder and louder. We all tried our best not to laugh. Two girls finally could not hold it in any longer and they did. They were later forced to state their repentance before the whole school. This was the first funeral that I attended.

Funerals in the world, regardless of cultures and customs, are often more similar than different. The relatives of the dead are sad and crying loudly. All participants are silent with cloudy faces. The black and white would cover all the lively colors. The sad musical pieces suffocate the atmosphere. All arrangements seem to be for the funeral participants to feel the fear and hopelessness toward death and to accept being conquered eventually by death. However, there is another kind of funeral held quietly around the world.

I came to Mei-Zhu's funeral with a sad and heavy heart. Mei-Zhu was a Christian. She owned a restaurant earlier and dedicated herself later to full-time charitable work. When working in City of Light services, a ministry of her church, she treated the homeless as her relatives—with compassion and generosity, bringing Christ's love to others. She became severely ill and faced death with courage and laughter. She once said to the visiting Christian brothers and sisters: "Please do not feel sad for me. I rejoice for going to be with my Lord." She then recited the verses of Psalm 23 in the Bible: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Mei-Zhu's funeral was held in the auditorium of the church. Entering the door, I encountered a noisy crowd. People were greeting each other and telling how they got to know Mei-Zhu. The front platform was decorated with more flowers than as usual. The ceremony began with someone leading the prayer, praising God for letting Mei-Zhu live among the people and for blessing others through her faith. This was followed by people getting on the platform to tell stories about Mei-Zhu. Her kindness, tenderness and wisdom made me full of respect for her. Her sense of humor often caused participants to laugh with joy. I was immersed in the laughter and my sadness disappeared without trace. The laughter in this funeral was declaring to the world that life does not end in death. Death has no power here and death has been conquered.

Dear friends, do not believe for a moment that life appears randomly and ends only in death. Jesus, the Son of God, fulfilled God's will with his death on the cross and his resurrection three days later: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

当毛泽东去逝的时候，我正在北京的一所中学上初中二年级。政府下令所有的单位都要为毛泽东举行葬礼。我们学校的葬礼是在操场举行的。那个九月的上午，阳光明媚，一向欢闹的校园却鸦雀无声。我们早就被校方告知：参加葬礼要绝对严肃，绝对禁止嬉笑，有违者必受严肃处理。我和同班的同学正谨慎小心地排队在校门口，准备入场。我们都没有心思像往常一样地去找乐子，打发时间。再说，校门外也没有可玩的东西，我只看见一辆马车停在一边。忽然，这匹马连声地打起喷嚏来，一个比一个响亮。我们都拼命地压抑住想笑的欲望，终于有两个女生忍不住先笑出声来。她们俩后来被迫在全校检讨，被批判。这是我有生以来参加的第一个葬礼。

世界上的葬礼不分文化习俗，常常大同小异。死者的亲属多是悲痛欲绝，号啕大哭。来宾则满脸阴沉，默默无言。黑白色笼罩了一切有活力的色彩。哀乐更令人窒息。一切的安排似乎都是为了让参加葬礼的人去体会死者所经历的对死亡的恐惧和绝望，去接受人人最终都将被死亡征服的结果。然而，还有另一种完全不同的葬礼每天在全世界悄然进行着。

我是带着悲哀的心情来参加美珠的葬礼的。美珠是一个基督徒。她原以开餐馆为生，后来全职地投身于慈善事业，在教会办的“城市之光服务所”做事。她待无家可归的人如自己的亲人一样，问寒问暖，出钱出力，将耶稣的爱带给他人。患重病后，面对死亡，美珠谈笑风生，对前来看望的基督徒兄弟姐妹说：“请不必替我悲伤，我为能与主相聚感到快乐。”接着，她就背诵起《圣经》中诗篇第二十三章的话，“我虽然行过死荫的幽谷、也不怕遭害。因为你与我同在。我一生一世必有恩惠慈爱随着我。我且要住在耶和华的殿中、直到永远。”

美珠的葬礼在教会的礼堂举行。一进门，我就遇到喧嚷的人群。人们互相问候，谈论着是如何认识美珠的。前台上除有更多的鲜花外，与平时没有不同。仪式开始后，人们被带领祷告，称颂神将美珠安排在大家之中，通过她的信心赐福给他人。紧接着，人们纷纷上台，讲述美珠的一些轶事。她的善良，温柔和机智使我对她更为尊敬。她的幽默不断地引起来宾欢快的笑声。我不能不在这笑声中陶醉，原有的悲哀早已无影无踪了。这葬礼中的笑声正向世界宣布，生命并不以死亡而结束。死亡在这里没有势力，已被征服。

亲爱的朋友，千万不要相信你的生命仅以偶然而出现，只会以死亡而告终。神子耶稣以他在十字架上的死和三天后的复活，成全了神的意愿：“神爱世人、甚至将他的独生子赐给他们、叫一切信他的、不至灭亡、反得永生”（约翰福音 3:16）。