

10th November 2025

Snares

“In the midst of earthly life, snares of death surround us.”

Martin Luther, *Mitten wir in leben sind*

Media vita in morte sumus (“In the midst of life we are in death”) is a Gregorian chant from the 14th century. Used in worship, “Media Vita” was also sung as a plea to God for aid in times of public need. The English version by Thomas Cranmer, a 16th century Archbishop of Canterbury, is part of the funeral liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549.

This is on my mind today because I’ve recently been informed of the death of two old friends, another example – as if I needed one – of Martin Luther’s affirmation: “In the midst of earthly life, snares of death surround us.” But I’m going to be bold and take issue with Luther, not to challenge the veracity of his words, for, indeed, death *is* part of life, and no matter how much we might dismiss the thought, or live as though we were immortal, death cannot be avoided. But I do want to take issue with Luther’s use of the word “snares”. The dictionary defines snare as:

Noun

- a contrivance ... for entangling birds or mammals
- something by which one is entangled or impeded

Verb (transitive)

- to capture by, or as if by use of, a snare
- to win or attain by artful or skilful manoeuvres
- to entangle or hold as if in a snare

Synonyms

- ambush, trap, tangle

I have no choice but to accept the reality that death is part of life. But I am *not* trapped by that reality. I feel no sense of entanglement. The progress of my life is not impeded by my mortality. I don’t feel that “artful or skilful manoeuvres” are holding me back.

Am I unusual? Is this the product of the passing of the years? Or even in dealing with the loss of good friends, do I now have a freedom “to be” and not be cast down by death? It feels that way, for sure, and I’m grateful for that. But however it happens, I thank God that I have a sense of peace today, knowing that, no matter what, death has lost its sting, and that the grave will *not* have a victory.

A prayer for today

At peace in the face of death? Thank God I can be tangled up with that.