

Life Among the Tombstones  
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*<sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself."  
John 5:25-26 (ESV)*

One of my wife and I's favorite hobbies,  
Is considered a little morose and morbid by some...  
We enjoy history and historical figures;  
We enjoy the wild west past;  
We enjoy envisioning life of a bygone era;  
We enjoy a good ghost story;  
We travel old roads and forgotten byways;  
We stay at historic hotels and haunted hangouts.

There seems to be one place that brings all of this  
together...

The mysterious and gothic,  
The ghostly and historic,  
The forgotten paths and neglected sites.  
They are the graveyards of Arizona's past.

You can tell a lot walking amongst the markers,  
Graves of those who have lived long ago.  
You can read what was important to them...  
You can see how they were remembered by their family.  
You can witness in the care of these quiet places,  
You can experience how these pioneers settled their homesteads...  
You can feel the quiet as it wraps around the heart,  
You can touch the past as you kneel before the stones,  
Brushing your fingers on the letters worn down by age.

As we have walked among the memorials,  
We have witnessed amazing things...  
People who served their country valiantly...  
And those who gave their very lives in the service they offered.  
People who predate the war – the Civil war that is,  
Those who died the year the war began  
And those that were born the year the war ended.  
We have read the memorials of those who settled the land,  
Before there was a state, before there was a government here  
When the land was unsettled, untamed  
Who embarked upon journeys that crossed the country,



Jerome Cemetery

<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/77139589>

And some who never left their counties.

We have seen the graves of wide variety of people...

There have been those of European descent...

And Native and Central American heritage.

We have read the markers of different ages –

Those who lived long upon the earth, into their eighties and nineties...

And markers of those who lived days and sometimes only hours.

There have been sites of men and women, boys and girls.

There have been families buried in the same plot of land.

There have been lone individuals, lying separated from others.

Some have passed recently...and some long, long ago.

As we stroll on a cool fall day, or in the heat of a summer's morning,  
There are so many feelings, impressions, thoughts that invade the soul.

Man's deepest questions are raised,

Humanities ageless longings are revealed.

A person's hopes and dreams are exposed.

Wonder about life and its brevity...

Wonder about death and its finality...

Fears about the tomorrow...

Regrets of the past...

These are the inner markers found among the graves,

These are the signposts of a life in transition.

While walking along a forgotten path,

Feelings spring forth –

The pride of parents who cared for their children,

The love of children for those who cared for them.

The esteem of a community for those who influenced their tribe...

The honor of a country thankful for sacrifice.

And personal thoughts abound and flood the mind and heart –

What is life...that it should end this way?

Is this the destiny that I am moving toward?

Is there nothing more to this experience we call

life,

Than the neglected headstones,

The overgrown grass,

The forgotten markers,

The forlorn yards and hallowed ground.

And in the midst of the fallen,

Reading the markers and marking the time,

Feelings of worry and fear arise,

Expressions of doubt and discouragement.

History is seen right before the eyes...



Chloride Cemetery,

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/95912667037364611/>

Fading fast in the neglect of the busy world,  
Neglected by the bustling crowds.

And one wonders, if the busy-ness of our lives,  
The bustle of our existence has risen for one reason...  
So we would not have to face the end of our days,  
    Mark the passing of our time...  
So we would not have to confront our mortality  
    Or the meaning of our existence.

Will our lives amount to more than dates on a stone?  
    Relationships identified on markers,  
    Contributions to our world etched but fading?  
Is there meaning beyond the grave?  
Is there hope in the graveyard?  
Is there life among the dead?

I stand taking in the sight and I realize –  
    We are all destined to gather here.  
There is hallowed ground that will bear our names  
    Will shelter our bodies.  
There are places that will be visited by generations yet  
conceived,  
    Wondering about our lives, our existence, our meaning.

And yet...

Standing still...  
With only the gentle breeze  
Blowing across the face,  
You can almost hear the voice...

Even in the midst of the death of young and old, male and female,  
    There is the whisper of one who calls to the willing ear.  
If you will incline your ear, and lean into the moment,  
    You can hear the voice speaking to the heart  
    From beyond the graves.

This is not the voice of ghosts or generations past...  
    This is not the of work or family,  
    It is not the whisperings of education and accomplishment.  
It is the voice of another,  
    One that will impart meaning in the face of death,  
    One that will whisper life in the face of mortality.

The Voice of the Son of God speaks –  
    In the midst of the silence of the stones.



Grand Cayon Cemetary Entrance  
<http://www.sharlot.org/library-archives/days-past/ralph-cameron-statehood-and-the-elks-opera-house-part-ii/>

The Voice of the Son of God speaks –  
In the stillness of the heart pondering and worrying.

The Voice of God speaks –  
And there is life when one faces the mortality of life.  
And there is hope, when one confronts the bleakness of the grave.  
And there is joy, when there is the depth of sorrow.  
And there is meaning, when life fades away.  
And there is love in the midst of the loneliness of the cemetery.

God's Son speaks to our lives –  
Even in the midst of the tombs.  
There is life, even in death,  
There is hope, even in sorrow,  
There is joy in the midst of our sadness.

The voice speaks and calls us to something more...  
Something more than feeding the ground for eternity.  
Something more than being forgotten by those who remain.  
Something more than the loss of connection with those in life.  
Something more than the cessation of existence at the end of our time.

The voice invites us to experience real life –  
A connection with God through the power of the Spirit,  
An encounter with the divine through the clarity of the Scripture.  
A relationship with the Creator  
Through the experience of the beginning and the end.  
A transformation of heart and soul  
Through living with the Living Christ.

Life in the midst of death...  
Confidence that death is not the only word, the final word.

Life in the midst of the gravestones...  
Reminded that our lives have meaning and purpose and joy  
Beyond the recordings in stone.

Standing and watching the sun set...  
The dying embers of light over the graves of those gone on.

I hear the voice, the whisper,  
Come to me...and find life.  
Come to me...and discover meaning.  
Come to me...and realize freedom!

And if you listen, you can hear it...



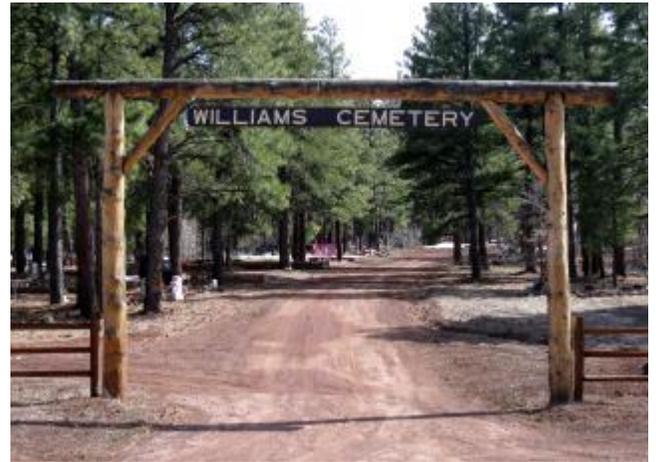
Castle Dome, Arizona, Blacksmith Shop and Cemetery,  
[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g31418-d2651085-i58751036-Castle\\_Dome\\_Mines\\_Museum\\_Ghost\\_Town-Yuma\\_Arizona.html](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g31418-d2651085-i58751036-Castle_Dome_Mines_Museum_Ghost_Town-Yuma_Arizona.html)

The voice of the Son of God speaking to your soul...  
Promising life among the stones...

Giving life among the dead.  
Life among the tombstones –  
It does not rise from the grave...  
But descends from above.

Find your life in His words...  
O death where is your sting?  
O grave where is your victory?

The sting of death is our sin  
And the power of sin is the broken law in our lives.  
But thanks be to the Son Jesus Christ,  
Who whispers among the tombstones,  
And imparts victory in the face of death!



Williams Az Cemetery,  
<http://www.examiner.com/article/cemetery-crawl-5-part-one>