

# Emily dickinson: death from christian standpoint



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Emily Dickinson is just one of many with a unique writing style that is well known in literature. She is mostly known for her short, lyric like poems that are generally directed with a single speaker that expresses their thoughts into a syntax form of writing.

In her poetry, Dickinson exhibits a common theme of representing death from a Christian standpoint throughout a number of her works including: *Because I Could Not Stop for Death, I Heard a Fly Buzz- When I Died*, and *I Never Lost as Much but Twice*. In *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*, Dickinson uses a Christian view to illustrate her experience in the carriage ride towards death with Mr. Mayhem himself. As she rides through what seems to be her life, she points out the different things she sees such as *We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain* (3) which has a Christian tone woven throughout it. In the Bible, grain is mentioned a lot in relation to the well-being of life, so as the speaker passes by the fields of grain, you can't help but think that she is making an ambiguous statement relating her life to the field of grain. It could be considered that she may be talking about her voyage from her nonstop life to an abrupt stop for death. As Dickinson goes on, she makes a comment on the sun setting in the sky saying *We passed the Setting Sun- /Or rather-He passed Us-* (4-5), but if she is on this exploration into death, then why doesn't she ascend into the sun rather than ride past it? Perhaps she is relating the sun to death in the way that as the sun disappears from the sky, so does warmth and light.

Like the sun, death seems to do the same thing to any living thing: once the living thing is dead, the warmth escapes as well as light. With the statement on the setting sun, I start to wonder how fast this carriage ride is in fact

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going. When the speaker states that Since then-? tis Centuries-and yet / Feels shorter than the Day (13-14), once again, I immediately think to the Lord and I compared these lines to the Bible once again where it says that one day in heaven is like a thousand days on earth and that time has no relation to God. Nancy Carol Joyner comments on the speed of the carriage ride stating that they ride slowly because Death is not in a hurry and the speaker has politely put aside both her work and play in order to go with him (par. 2). Based on Joyner's statement, I assume that the carriage is going at an exceptionally slow speed as if there is no perception of time with death. Like other poems by Emily Dickinson, I Heard a Fly Buzz- When I Died carries the same common theme of death from a Christian standpoint. The first spiritual acknowledgement we get to is during the last few moments of life as friends and family gather around for their last goodbyes. Dickinson shows a glimpse into what goes on during one's last gasps for air: The Eyes around - had wrung them dry - And Breaths were gathering firm For that last Onset - when the King Be witnessed - in the Room(5-8) Dickinson clearly takes note of the surroundings in the room around the speaker and reveals a number of things to take into account.

Firstly, we have dried eyes sitting around the speaker which is most likely signifying that the emotional pain that has been overpowering these people has finally taken a toll on their bodies. It is now to the point where there is still the visible sadness about the situation, but there are no more tears to cry. In the next line, breaths are being held in an ironic anticipation. The friends and family of the speaker have lost their ability to cry, and now they are holding their breaths and are probably afraid to blink in fear of losing the

person they love in a literal blink of an eye. Then we get to the last two lines in what everyone is waiting for: God. The speaker, along with the rest of the people in the room (presumably), are waiting for God, the King to ascend down from heaven to take his child home. In the last stanza, While mourners wait for God to appear in the death room, a fly With Blue-uncertain stumbling Buzz-' occupies the last of the dying person's consciousness. (Gray, 68). The poem finally ends as the speaker passes away and she says I could not see to see (16). It is assumed that God did not come to get her to take her home, but she died with the sound of a fly's buzz. As I have shown through some of Emily Dickinson's poems, she carries a theme of death from a Christian standpoint throughout all of them. In I Never Lost as Much But Twice, the speaker starts out on the topic of mourning a lost soul, more specifically, two lost souls. She immediately refers to herself as a beggar / Before the door of God! (3-4) in which she has grieved at the foot of the Lord in search of something, maybe closure or peace of the passing of the souls she has lost. Randall Huff debates that for the speaker, it felt as if everything had been taken from her until she seemed a virtual beggar at God's door without spiritual resources of her own(par. 1).

However, as you continue on to the next lines of the poem, the speaker reveals that angels, twice descending, / reimbursed my store(5-6) to which one can assume the author is saying that God has seen her pain and sent new people into her life to fill the metaphorical whole in her heart that was left gaping open from friends passed. The image that the reader can get from those few words are a bunch of heavenly figures, maybe even God himself, coming down from heaven to reassure the speaker in her faith in

God. Finally, the speaker states in an almost prayer type matter, Burglar, banker, father, / I am poor once more! (7-8). The speaker is basically saying that God is like a burglar, a banker, and a father. God is like a burglar in the way that he steals people away from you when you don't expect it and seemingly without the slightest bit of thought into how it would affect the person. It is almost like in I Heard a Fly Buzz- When I Died in that God took the speaker from her family and friends. Secondly, the speaker describes God as a Banker in how he can always provide and reimburse' you in life like he did when giving her new friends. Lastly, the speaker defines God as Father because he is the almighty one. He is the creator of all things including all humans, or otherwise known as his children.

I Never Lost as Much but Twice may be the greatest example of showing death from a Christian standpoint. Even though Emily Dickinson is known for her unique use of personification in her work but the way she incorporates death into her poems in a way that is only known to her. Throughout Because I Could Not Stop for Death, I Heard a Fly Buzz- When I Died and I Never Lost as Much but Twice, Dickinson carried along the theme of death from a Christian standpoint that showed life, grief, and the last moments leading up to death.