

## "A Seamstress Made Alive!"

Acts 9:36-42

16 January Anno Domini 1986

Sermon for the Funeral of

Irene Conrad

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

On New Year's Eve (less than two weeks ago), I brought out the church record book. Contained within this book is a running record of all of the marriages, baptisms, deaths, and confirmations. At that time I noted that about entries had been made for 1985. I also made mention that only the Lord knew what entries would be included for 1986. Little did I think that one of the first entries in that book would be for Irene.

With her departure, a wife and mother and grandmother and great grandmother is no longer here -- a friend and sister in Christ and member of Our Redeemer is not among us now. Were it my duty to paint sadness and sorrow, it would be easy to point the reality of these mortal remains and let them speak louder than any words.

But I am not here to cause tears of sorrow, but rather to give tears of joy. I am not here to show the victory of death; but rather the victory of a dear Christian -- not to show the darkness of the grave, but the Light of the world that shines from the empty tomb on Easter morning into the graves of those who trust in Jesus as their Savior.

Still, the hurt is there for you and me who have suffered a great loss. Walt, yours is the greatest, for you shared more than 51 years of life with Irene. I would encourage you to look to the Lord for your comfort today and in the days and months ahead. Let His Word enter into our hearts and soothe our sorrow and heal our wounded spirits.

For this purpose let us now go to the Word. This text came to me when it became evident that Irene was going to receive the full measure of the blessings of eternal life. Listen to these words from Acts, chapter 9 as we consider

"A Seamstress Made Alive!!". . .

Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas or Gazelle. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, rise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. He gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all

Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

Here ends the Scripture Reading.

There she was -- the woman who had done so much in the congregation as she served the Lord. She had been known by many as one who was a follower of Christ Jesus who trusted Him as her personal Savior. As a response to the faith which the Holy Spirit worked in her heart she was a woman who was filled with works of charity. She had been active and alive in Christ. She was the kind of person who was willing to work very hard and for long hours in the service of the Lord.

Yet, in the course of time, she became sick and this was a sickness which was extremely serious. After a while she died as a result of this disease which she had. Then she was prepared for burial and laid in a room until the time came for her to be placed in her grave.

In the meantime, they sent for the pastor -- two men went to tell Peter of the news and to ask him to come to where she was. When he arrived, the widows were weeping and showing Peter and one another some of the coats, garments and things which Tabitha had made.

Perhaps you, like me, thought about some of the things that Irene had sewn -- choir robes, drapes and clothes. The last time she was in church worshipping, it was to bring and present a beautiful quilt that she and others had worked on.

But there came a day when she could work no more -- when her illness had sapped her strength and when needle and thread could not be picked up. It was at such a time when all of the acts of charity and all the good works must be laid down. When Irene was on her deathbed that we talked about what was really important. Upon learning of the seriousness of her disease, she first expressed her concern for you Walt -- she said that this really shook you up. I asked her then if it was shaking her up at all. She replied that she was not afraid to die.

The similarities between Tabitha and Irene are astonishingly similar. Just as Tabitha was a disciple, so was Irene. She became one early in her life when the Holy Spirit worked faith in the heart. She remained faithful to her Lord -- trusting in Jesus. Last Friday afternoon she received the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper -- she desired it as a strengthening of her faith in the last hours of her life.

Tabitha and Irene are like so many Christians who have been touched by the Lord's promise of eternal life. The temptation might be to stop at this point and say no more. But to do so would be incomplete -- it would be wrong.

Let's go back to the Scriptures with Tabitha for a moment. She had been prepared for burial was not in accordance with the will of the Lord at the time. God used Peter to make the command that Tabitha should arise and that is just what she did. Death could not hold that woman because when Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the tomb, death was defeated and eternal life was guaranteed for God's people.

As with Tabitha, so also Irene's mortal remains have been prepared for burial. But the grave will not be able to hold them either. God will send His angel and with the sound of the trumpet they shall arise. Take comfort in that and know that those who fall asleep in the Lord will be raised and

reunited with loved ones who also remain faithful.

Keep with you, Walt, and with all you who are children of the heavenly Father the assurance and the confident which Job proclaimed:

I know that my Redeemer lives, and at least He will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see on my side, and my yes shall behold, and not another.

I began speaking of a book which our church uses to keep track of the acts of the congregation. One entry has been made in that book for 1986. I am quite confident that more names will be written in those blank lines of that book. Who they will be? I can not say. Only the Lord knows that information.

And unless the Lord Jesus comes to end all of history during our lifetime, then you and I will most certainly occupy a place similar to the earthly remains of Irene. Are you ready for that to happen? I can't tell you when it will be, but I can inform you most certainly that it will take place. Is your spiritual relationship with the Lord such that when your time arrives the Lord will have your name written in the Book of Life and will proclaim to you: Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master! It was for Irene and I pray that it may be for you. Or, have you been ignoring the Lord Jesus; doing your own thing and starving yourself spiritually. Have you been drifting away from God, or, have you never really known Him? Each day, each hour and each minute you are moving closer to a time when a group of people will be gathered around what will be left of you, just as you and I are gathered around the earthly remains of our departed sister in Christ.

Irene has entered into her rest -- she has been taken from battle to victory, from struggle to triumph and from sorrow to gladness. After her pilgrimage here on this earth she has been called to the eternal city of the Lord. She is in everlasting joy as she has been taken into the bosom of the Lord. Behold, a Seamstress Made Alive!

May God grant that we may again be aware of the necessity of watching, praying, worshiping, and being ready. Amen.