

## "To Be Content"

### Philippians 4:10-13

3 October Anno Domini 1987

Sermon for the Funeral of

Doris Serratos

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the Name of our Lord -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

When death comes to the relief of one whose life was embittered by sorrow and suffering, both the godless and the believers can be heard to say: "Her death was a great blessing." For the godless, this conveys the idea that it was better for her to be dead than to be alive. But even if death were man's utter extinction, as the godless profess to believe, would it not be a mockery to welcome such an event which has taken a loved one from a family?

For the Christian to say: "Her death was a great blessing" means something much different. Dear members of the family, friends, your hearts, which are aching at the great loss you have sustained, are now yearning after a word comfort and contentment. Let me say unto you: "Indeed, her death was a great blessing to her; she is better off now than before; death was a great gain to her."

Among Christians, these words are flowing with comfort. We have not lost those who died. And they who died have gained great things. They are delivered from all sorrow and suffering. And that perhaps is the least gain. The most precious gain is that which results from their relationship to Jesus Christ. Because of that relationship with the Lord, you and I can be content -- both here in time and hereafter in eternity.

God's message to you this morning deals with such contentment in life. I invite you to listen to the words of Philippians 4:10-13 and learn how . . .

... "To Be Content."

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me; you were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.

It is a characteristic of people to seek contentment -- to be pleased, satisfied and happy with their lives. We spend a great deal of time and money and energy seeking contentment. Occasionally and for brief periods of time, we might even achieve a bit of contentment. A couple works hard to raise their children, give them an education, send them out into the world and also save enough money to retire and travel in contentment.

But very quickly we realize that contentment gained through money, security, travel and the good life do not prevent sickness or tragedy from entering into our little worlds. In such cases, contentment turns quickly into confusion and restlessness. And so we ask ourselves, "Where can I find contentment? Is there such a thing as being content which applies to this life and beyond?"

Paul wrote to his beloved Christian friends: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content." Here was a man who had been imprisoned for his faith, felt the 39 lashes of the whip on his back on 5 occasions, beaten with rods 3 times, stoned once shipwrecked 3 times threatened by Jews and Gentiles, endangered by rivers and robbers, and adrift at sea for a night and a day. In addition to that, he lived with the fact that he was personally responsible for the imprisonments and probably the deaths of many people in the Christian Church that he had persecuted before his conversion. How in the world could he say: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content"!??

In Doris' life, there had been some tremendous disappointments and tragedies -- the loss of a beloved son and son-in-law -- physical ailments in members of her family and within her own body. In the past 6 months, and especially in the three weeks, Doris had experienced pain, surgeries and suffering as her physical condition deteriorated. But I say to you that she was content in her faith.

So content was she that in July she asked me to come out to her home and work out the details for this funeral service. The readings that you heard from Ecclesiastes (a time to live and a time to die) from 2 Timothy (I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith), and from Luke (Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace) -- those texts she chose for you hear this morning. She selected the hymns and chose the pall bearers. Most people don't even want to think their own death, let alone make plans for their funeral service. She echoed the words of Paul: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content."

Where in the world can one find such contentment? Certainly, and especially at times like this, you recognize it is not in money, pleasure, material possessions, family, people, or any other thing in this world. For these all soon vanish. It is not to be found in oneself -- for inside here we find a guilty conscience that will not let us rest, a mind that is not always wise, a body that is getting sick and old, nor even in the future for none of us know how much of a future we have left in this world. Even within this room today, how many are at this moment carrying around the beginnings of cancer, heart disease that is progressing or even, a rare liver disease? Who will be next? How long will it be before your mortal remains occupy a metal container like this? Let's face it people, such thoughts do not make us very content!

Where can we find contentment? It can be found only where Paul and Doris found it -- in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God, in His grace, looked upon mankind's hopelessness and eternal destruction and intervened. The perfect Son of God was incarnate by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary and lived to die on the cross that you and I might be content knowing that our sins have been forgiven for His sake, that His death means life for us, and that all of God's wrath was taken by Christ on the cross that we would be totally and completely acceptable to the Almighty. As I said a couple of weeks ago, if God allowed that to happen to His own Beloved Son on the cross, do you think that He doesn't want to forgive you and call you his own?

The Resurrection of Christ gives us the guarantee that death is not the end -- that this is not the end of life, but rather the beginning of what real life -- the life that God wants for you -- is all about! This what Paul believed and he was (and is) content. This is what Doris believed and she was (and is)

content. Now this Gospel -- this Good News is something that can make you content as well and it doesn't matter what you past has been like, it doesn't matter that you don't know what is in store for you tomorrow, it doesn't matter about your physical condition -- sickness or health, rich or poor, old or young, man or woman. Christ died and rose for you in order that you might be an heir of heaven.

Paul wrote: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me. When you believe and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you can face any situation, any tragedy, any loss of a family member, any thing, because you end up a winner no matter what happens.

Earlier in his letter Paul wrote: "For to me to is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account." That is contentment!

We know that Doris knew how to be content. We also know that now she is content. For where she is there is no sorrow, no tears, no hunger, no thirst, no pain, no suffering, no consequences of sin for she is with her Lord.

Knowing that, you and I, as believers are able to say that her death was a great blessing. Knowing that, you and I, as believers are able to look forward to a heavenly reunion with Doris, Jimmy and all those who have departed this life as children of God. And knowing that, you and I, are able . . .

To Be Content!