

"The Words of Jesus" -- Matthew 24:35

Funeral Sermon for Clarence Haussler

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Emmett, Idaho

Dear family members of Clarence, friends, members of Our Redeemer congregation, and especially you, Etta and Dena,

On this day when your hearts are filled with both grief and joy, we are certainly reminded of the truth that life in this world is temporary. The psalmist prays,

"Lord, let me know my end, and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is! Behold, Thou hast made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in Thy sight. Surely every man stands as a mere breath!" (Psalm 39:4-5)

We even incorporate the temporary into our language. We say that Clarence passed away last Thursday morning. And even though Clarence lived to be 94 years old in this passing world, we know that is really such a short time when compared with eternity - infinitely less than a drop in the bucket. As we gather together today on this occasion, and as we view the events of this world, and as the days and decades of our lives are marked off and placed into that receptacle called *history*, we are convinced that everything and everyone is passing away.

Our Lord Jesus, while on His way to the cross where He would die under the penalty of your sins and mine, spoke of this passing away. He wanted His followers to know about the end times and not to fear them or fall away from Him when these things occurred. What Jesus said should cause each one of us, as we are passing the time away, to stop and think. Therefore, dear people, listen to one verse, Matthew 24:35 under the theme of ...

... The Words of Jesus

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

There are really three parts to this sermon and they come from the text. First, there is the truth that heaven and earth will pass away. Second, the truth that the words of the Lord Jesus will not pass away. And third, the application of these truths to your life and mine. Let's consider the first.

I. Heaven and earth will pass away.

We should be convinced of the temporary nature of this world as we look at the events around us. This heaven, that is, our atmosphere and this earth are in a state of decay and are most certainly passing away. We hear reports that the ozone layer is disappearing and water quality is getting worse. You can take a tour and view the crumbling pyramids of Egypt, the ruins of Rome and the crater that once was majestic Mt. St. Helens. You can buy pieces of the Berlin Wall, walk among the remaining Redwood forests and nervously stand under the ever-increasingly unstable Leaning Tower of Pisa. These things are passing away.

Other things have passed away and are no more. You can only read about and hear reports of the Passenger Pigeon, the hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Nebraska sod house where Clarence was born in 1904. He was a teenager when the Russian Revolution took place and lived to see the downfall of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the rise and fall of a super-power nation within the short span of a man's life.

You and I, too, should be convinced of this decay and decline. How many of us are able to run as fast as we once could? Or, sleep like a baby? Or concentrate or hear or see as good as when we were younger? Our faculties decline and we are unable to do the things that we once didn't even think twice about doing. Clarence experienced all of this too. His hearing passed away years ago. His ability to care for himself decreased in recent years. This condition worsened until ... well, until he passed away.

You know, Jesus was absolutely correct and we are convinced that heaven and earth are passing away and ... we know that we are a part of it. And unless the world ends in the near future, or you suddenly die in an accident, or you are killed by someone else, you will experience, or will continue to experience, this same decline, until well, until a group of people assemble as we are this day in memory of you.

Perhaps you have heard the saying that the only things that are inevitable are death and taxes. Actually, that is not true. Taxes are a part of this world and they will pass away. The saying would be more accurate if it went something like this. "The only things that are inevitable are death and the words of Jesus." Death scares us and it is usually not something we look forward to. But what about the words of Jesus? Do you look forward to the words of Jesus? The Bible informs us that ...

II. The words of Jesus will not pass away.

But just what are these words of Jesus? Our Lord said,

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19).

Now, Charles and Louise wanted the all the blessings of Christ for their infant son and so baby Clarence was baptized on April 3, 1904. From that moment on, the Lord was with Clarence, even to the end of his life in this world.

Consider another word of Jesus. *Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father Who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32).*

The Lord enabled the young man to hear the Good News about Christ's sin-atonement death and triumphant resurrection. He was able to memorize Bible passages and learn the basic doctrines of the Christian faith -- the only religion that leads to Paradise. As a result, on March 24, 1918, he stood before the Lord's altar at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Arapahoe, Nebraska and confirmed the Christian faith, confessing the words of Jesus Who declared *I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me (John 14:6)*. His confirmation verse was not only a bit of Scripture that he memorized, but also one which he believed, Acts 4:12 -- *nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Clarence heard the words of Jesus as he faithfully attended church and responded to the invitation of our Lord Who said,

Take and eat; this is My Body which is given for you. Take and drink; this cup is the new testament is My Blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins (Matthew 26).

He heard the words of Jesus which kept him close to our Redeemer, *Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden; and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).*

And when he could no longer come to church and hear the words of Jesus with his ears, Clarence heard the word with his eyes. In the last few years when I visited him, he would lip-read what I was saying. Thus, he heard such words of Jesus as the Lord's Prayer and other portions of the Bible. He could make out and follow the liturgy that he had heard thousands of times before ... the invocation, the confession of sin, the word of absolution, the same confession of faith that we spoke together earlier, the 23rd Psalm, and the benediction. All of this was familiar to him because he continued to hear the Word of God and to be nurtured on the Sacraments of our Lord. He heard the words of Jesus which encouraged him, *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).*

Finally, in the fulness of time, last Thursday morning when this heaven and this earth were passing away for him, Clarence heard the voice of Jesus calling him to the place where there is no more suffering or death or grieving or pain or sorrow or sin or hurt. He heard the words of Jesus that will not pass away ... *Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Master (Matthew 25:21)*. These words bring us to the third part of the sermon, namely to ...

III. The application of the words of Jesus to our lives.

Jesus declares, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.*

This is a true comfort to those who belong to the Lord and they are more than uncomfortable to those who are not Christians. The same Jesus Who said, *Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34)* also indicated that to those who were not His own and ignored His Word, He would say, *Depart from Me, you accursed; into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).*

Jesus' words - both the ones expressing everlasting joy and the ones announcing eternal condemnation - will not pass away. They will continue forever. That's a wake-up call for each one of us ... for those who are Christians to remain steadfast in the Word and work of the Lord ... for those

who may have stayed or strayed away from the Lord and His Church to take heed and not wait another day to return ... and for those who may have never heard that God has provided the Way to eternal life through His Son.

It is God's earnest desire that not a single person be lost. He absolutely wants you to be with Him now and with Him forever. Dear people, just consider how serious God is. He sent His Son to live for you ... He permitted His Son to die on the cross under the penalty of all your sins ... to rise again from the dead to demonstrate that victory over sin, death and the devil has taken place. That's how serious the Lord is about you. He wants you to be with Him now and forever. Don't let another day go by without believing in Christ and trusting Him as your Savior. In fact, God has permitted the events of history to take place such that you would be in this building for this memorial service for Clarence Haussler so that you could hear ... so that you could hear ...

... The Words of Jesus

Or, as Jesus said on repeated occasions,

He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Amen.