

# "A Rest for the People of God" Hebrews 4:9

The Funeral Sermon for Ila Driscoll

1 April Anno Domini 1999  
Maundy Thursday  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho  
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

O Lord, our Creator, Redeemer and Comforter, as we come together to hear Your Word, we humbly pray that You may open our hearts to the preaching of Your Word, so that we may repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior. Hear us for His sake. Amen.

Dear members of Ila's family, her friends, her neighbors, members of Our Redeemer congregation (Ila's church family) and especially you, Cecil:

There is no new revelation or profound secret revealed when it is said that there are many ways and different times in life when death comes. Death, according to our human time-tables, may be too soon; for example, it may come suddenly when an infant son is taken. Then there is the mother who is taken away from her little girl and loving husband. At such times we are not always able to understand what God had in mind to allow these untimely deaths to occur. We ask "why?"

For us here today, we are not burdened with the asking of that unanswered question. Ila's death was not unexpected. Now that does not mean that a loving husband doesn't grieve the death of his wife, and it doesn't mean that children and grandchildren don't cry at their loss. What it does mean is this: Ila's suffering is over and she is at rest and at peace in the Lord's presence. She did experience a lengthy time of hurting, not only physically, but, as you are well aware, Cecil because you were going through it too, she hurt mentally and emotionally as she had to go from home to hospital, and finally to the nursing home. That was hard for her and it was difficult for you.

Finally, last Monday, the 29th of March, the day after Palm Sunday, Ila's awful load was lifted from her and her suffering ended as the Lord called her to her eternal rest in Christ. Ah, yes indeed, to be able to rest in peace at the end of a life. Such knowledge grants those left behind not on the depths of hurts, but also the heights of joys. Truly, we are thankful to God for the rest that He gives to His people.

Therefore, on this day when you are experiencing two basic feelings ... the feeling of joy that Ila is suffering no more and is now with the Lord her God, and the feeling of sorrow for your great loss ... I would direct your attention to the Word of God for comfort and hope. Please listen to our sermon text for this funeral sermon, a single, short verse from the Letter to the Hebrews, doing so under the theme of ...

*... A Rest for the People of God*

Hebrews 4:9 -- *Therefore there remains a rest for the people of God.*

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

This verse really provides two points of application for us today. First, with respect to Ila, it gives a great deal of reassurance, comfort and peace. *Therefore there remains a rest for the people of God.*

We recall that in the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, He did so in six days and on the seventh day, He rested, or in other words, He ceased from His creative work. Today is Maundy Thursday and tomorrow is Good Friday. Both are days of Holy Week in Christian churches. It was on Maundy Thursday when Jesus took a towel and stooped to wash the feet of His disciples. It was on Good Friday that the work of Jesus on our behalf was completed. He was crucified on the cross for you and me. He suffered the penalty for your sins and mine. All of God's Divine wrath against sin was vented on Jesus, Who was and Who is true God and true man, and all of the onslaught of the forces of evil were unleashed on Jesus the Christ. Dear people, behold the broken Body of Jesus of your Savior and see the Blood of our Redeemer shed for us. Here is the price that God was willing to pay and what His Son was willing to suffer for us.

Then from this very same cross, near the end of the sixth day of the week, on that first Good Friday, this Jesus announced that His work was completed when He said, *It is finished!* and then prayed, *Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.* Having said this Jesus breathed His last and died. Therefore, at the end of six days, as He had done when He was involved in the creation of the world, the Son of God ceased from His work. His Body was taken down from the cross, placed in a tomb, and He rested on the seventh day.

So also, Ila, at the end of the days in which she labored here on this earth, breathed her last. Her body was taken from her deathbed in the nursing home, placed into this casket, and now she rests from all the toil and trouble that was hers.

And if that is all there is, then what a sad, sad situation. If life is simply an uncertain period of time lived from the womb to the tomb, then we would have to agree with Shakespeare's tragic MacBeth who said:

"Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing."

That, and much worse, is what life would all be about if the Jesus story ended in a tomb outside the City of Jerusalem and those who call themselves Christians would among the sorryiest, most pathetic people who awaited death. But dear people, listen to the Rest of the Story. On Easter morning, on the first day of the week, or if you will, on the eighth day of the week, Jesus rose from the dead. Death and the grave were unable to keep Him.

Do you realize that Ila believed in the Resurrection of Jesus and she trusted that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so also those who believe in Him will also be raised. So for Ila, departure from

this life was not all there was and not all there is. Cecil and family and friends and neighbors, this should be of tremendous comfort and consolation to you. *Therefore there remains a rest for the people of God.*

Consequently, you don't have to be angry with God for answering Ila's prayers for deliverance from the hurts and sorrows and sufferings of this life. You don't have to grieve without hope for the Bible declares, *there remains a rest for the people of God*, and this is an eternal day, one that never ends.

Therefore, there is the second application for this text for us today. The words of the Bible say, *therefore there remains a rest for the people of God*. For the people of God -- that phrase means that death is not an automatic entry into heaven. We might have some questions about this 'people of God' business. Just who are the people of God and who aren't? Just who is in and who is out? Listen carefully. God in Christ has provided salvation for all people. For those who have been given the gift of belief in Jesus and trust in what He has done on Good Friday and on Easter Morning, there is salvation. By the grace of God through faith in Christ, individuals ... one at a time ... become one of the people of God.

Ila knew that and was greatly comforted when those great-grandchildren were given the gift of faith when they were baptized about a year ago. Baptism is God's gift to them and when they were baptized, they became people of God. Adults hear this Good News, believe that Jesus died and rose for them, and they become people of God. Then for both infant and adult, the passage becomes a great comfort -- *Therefore there remains a rest for the people of God.*

For those of you who are the people of God, you are called to remain steadfast in faith, trusting in Christ as your only hope. For those of you who are not one of the people of God, you have heard the Word which is able to grant you that peace which extends beyond this life. Jesus Himself extended the invitation when He said, *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

As the people of God will be gathered together on that day when the Lord raises the dead, so also the people of God will be gathered together this Sunday to hear the Good News of Jesus Resurrection from the dead.

That was the comfort of Ila's spirit and the strength of her soul. As we think about Ila and the truth of God's Good News -- that she believed and trusted that God the Father sent His Son to die for all people and to rise again from the dead, then we take consolation that she rests in peace and Paradise. As for you and me, well nothing more really needs to be said. Think on these things that you have heard and may God grant either that you remain, or that you become and remain one of His people. For truly, the Bible declares, *there remains a rest for the people of God*. Amen.