

**"The Preparations for Paradise"
John 14:1-6**

**Funeral for
Emily Frances Naher
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho**

15 August Anno Domini 2000

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Dear Paul, Marcia, members of Emily's family, friends, neighbors and members of Our Redeemer congregation,

At times like this, we are reminded of two days that are particularly and especially before us. One of those two days is the day of the funeral - today. As you well know, Paul and Marcia, there have certainly been a great number of things to do and decisions to make since last Friday when the Lord took Emily to Himself in Heaven. There have been numerous preparations in order that the grave side committal could take place and in order for this Divine Service of the Word to occur at this time and place. Some items are demanding physically and emotionally. For example, there is the difficult task of writing a mother's obituary and with such writing the flood of memories and the range of emotions.

Other items on the long list of things to do are checked off and accomplished in relatively easy fashion, like choosing the hymns. In fact, Emily helped out because she had been preparing for this day and this memorial service. She had the hymns selected for this day and that made it easier. You see, on March 19, 1986 Emily made some preparations by filling out a sheet and indicating her preferences for this service and especially the hymns ... "Blessed Savior" which we just sang and "Jerusalem the Golden" which we will sing in a few minutes. She also wanted "A Mighty Fortress" played during the dismissal. You had about four days to get all the preparations ready for this day. Despite what one might think at this point, today, the day of the funeral, is the easiest day of the two.

You see, the second day is not only harder ... it is, in fact, an impossible day; and to make it even more frightening, no one can tell you what day it is. It is, in all likelihood, a different day for each one of us here. For Emily, it was last Friday, the day of her death. What day will it be for you? What is your death day? I can't tell you. It might be today; it might be ten years from now. Left all alone, with only yourself and your death day ahead of you, ... well ... there is no way to prepare for that portal called death which leads to eternity. Indeed, without God there is only eternal destruction and condemnation on the other side of your death day. In the darkness of this day at hand and that day ahead of us, such thoughts are more than troubling ... they are terrifying!

The preparations for the funeral service are easy when compared with the preparations for the day of

death. Truly, not one of us here can prepare for the day of death. Those preparations must be made by God. On this day Emily wanted you to hear a sermon based on a section from John 14, and to do so that you may know of the preparations that the Lord has undertaken and brought about for your death day. Please listen to the Words of Jesus as written in John 14:1-6 and consider ...

... The Preparations for Paradise

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Thus far the Word of the Lord our God.

We are not able to make the preparations necessary to enter into heaven and the eternal Paradise that God wants us to have in His Presence. Each one of us is a sinful human being who daily sins much in thought, word and deed ... by what we do and by what we don't do ... by what we say and what we don't say ... by what we think and what we don't think. Hour after hour, week after week, year after year the burden of sin builds and there is terror as we consider just what we deserve from the holy, just, righteous God. For those who take their sinfulness and their sins seriously, to say that our hearts are troubled is an understatement. For such as those, preparing for the day of death is to be ignored, as if it would never come.

The Lord God must make all the preparations if we are to be with Him forever. The Good News to you this day, whoever you are, is this. God has done it. Let not your hearts be troubled. In order to accomplish your salvation, God the Father sent God the Son into this world to take your place by enduring the penalty for your sinfulness and for all your sins ... every one of them. That is what happened on the cross when Jesus died. He endured the pain that should have been yours. Jesus paid the debt that was yours. Taking your place, the Incarnate Son of God was abandoned by the Father when Jesus suffered on the cross in your place. Listen to Jesus, Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. Jesus is God, just as the Father is God. God prepared your redemption when He died on the cross. His Words "It is finished!" indicate a complete payment and accomplished salvation for you. Truly, truly, I say to you, Jesus is our Redeemer and He has made all the preparations for you to be with Him in Paradise.

Shortly after her birth on July 22, 1914, God baptized Emily into His death on the cross and her death became His death and His death became her death. Emily died that day of her Baptism. She was crucified with Christ and from that moment on, it was no longer she who lived but Christ living in her; and the life which she then lived in the flesh, she lived by faith in the Son of God, Who loved her and gave Himself for her (Galatians 2:20). On the day of her Baptism in 1914, the Lord was preparing Emily for last Friday when she entered Paradise.

Please remember, the Lord God must make all the preparations if we are to be with Him forever. The Good News to you this day, whoever you are, is this. God has done it. Let not your hearts be troubled. In order to accomplish your salvation, Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day ... on what we call Easter morning. Neither death nor the devil nor the grave could not hold Him. He has

defeated them for you.

Shortly after her birth on July 22, 1914, God granted Emily her first resurrection when He baptized her with water and the Word. She was buried with Christ through Baptism into death, that just as Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so she also walked in newness of Life from that moment (Romans 6:4). On the day of her Baptism in 1914, the Lord was preparing Emily for last Friday when she entered Paradise. Jesus is our Redeemer and He has made all the preparations for you to be with Him in Paradise.

Jesus invites when He says, "You believe in God, believe also in Me." The eternal blessings of God because of His Son's life, death and resurrection are yours by faith in Christ. Salvation is by God's gift of faith and not by man's good deeds. Faith itself is God's work that the Holy Spirit gives through the Word. The Lord worked faith in Emily's infant heart in 1914 when she heard the proclamation of the Good News. God granted her faith to believe in Him. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the Gift of God, not because of works (Eph. 2:8-9).

The Lord, through Word and Sacrament, sustained and strengthened the faith that He wrought in Emily throughout her life. Thus, in her last months and weeks, in her final days and hours, she could commend herself into the Lord's hands and not fear the day of her death. A couple weeks ago she partook of Christ's Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper for the last time here on this earth. On Friday the Lord, Who had prepared a place for her at His banqueting Table in Paradise, received her unto Himself that where He is, there she is also now. So she and Al are together once again and their voices hymn amidst the angels, the archangels and all the company of heaven singing the never-ending liturgy of the Church Triumphant. Therefore, let not your heart be troubled.

In the sermon text, Jesus was preparing His followers for what was ahead for Him - for His awful suffering and His cursed death on the cross. He knew that His disciples would need hope in the days that followed. Therefore, He tells them about His Ascension ... about not only dying and about not only rising from the dead, but also for His Ascension in and to heaven. Thus Jesus speaks to you and thus did Emily want you, this day, to hear these Words of hope and comfort.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

But you know something, on the day when Jesus spoke these words, not everyone knew what He meant. At least one person among those hearing the Word that day did not know what Jesus meant. At least one person in the congregation did not know what was being said, did not understand, was not all that certain what this meant. It could be that this one person couldn't quite believe that Jesus meant this for that one person.

I mean, all of this that has been said, is really quite hard to believe. It is, in fact, impossible to believe ... unless it is God's Word of Promise that you have heard and that the Holy Spirit has worked through this Word to give you the gift of faith to believe such Word of God. Who is that one person? Who is that individual who speaks for all who wonder and doubt and are not quite certain that this Jesus is all that they have heard about?

Dearly beloved, it is Thomas who speaks for many when He says to God, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Does that sound like the voice that you often hear in your own head or from your own heart? Listen to Jesus' answer to every Thomas in this world and especially in this room: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

That, dear people is pure Gospel ... pure Good News. Jesus is the Way because He is the only one who could make the preparations for your entry into Paradise. He is the Truth that has prepared a mansion for you that awaits you. He is the Life that extends beyond the day of your death and never, ever ends.

Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, concluded by saying, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." That is neither a threat nor a law. It is a promise. The Savior Jesus is saying that there is no one else who is able - no one else who has made the necessary preparations for you to enter into Paradise on the day of your death. You can't make these preparations - neither can any Naher, nor any Luther, nor any Jones, nor any Smith, nor any man, woman, child, infant or angel - only Jesus. No one comes to the Father except through Christ. The Son of God, in His becoming one of us, in His sinless Life, in His sin-atonement death on the cross, in His victorious Resurrection, in His majestic Ascension and in His Life-giving and sustaining Word, has made all preparations for you to be with Him in Paradise.

May God grant you peace for the remainder of this day, and for as many days, and for as few days, as He grants you here and now. Amen.

Once again, the sermon text that Emily Frances Naher wanted you to hear today:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Amen.