

"Got Time for Another Cup?"

Matthew 4:16

Funeral Sermon - Delores (Dee) Piepkorn

11 January Anno Domini 2003

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly Beloved Family of Dee Piepkorn,

Certainly you have experienced the truth of what has often been thought and said - that there seems to be no easy way to deal with the death of a loved one. Each separation of body and soul has its own anguish for those who are left to grieve. You sat with LaVerne for the years of his cancer and you stood at his bedside for weeks as he waited to depart and be with the Lord in heaven. Now you are at the funeral of Dee who, after she sat down to drink a second cup of coffee and before she could drink that cup last Monday, was suddenly called to eternity. For LaVerne there was endurance and acceptance over time concerning what would happen; for Dee there was, and there still is, shock and amazement. What is common to both is that the grieving and the tears come so easily, particularly in the lonely, dark hours of long nights.

Last Monday was the day when the Lord took Dee to be with Him and was the day celebrated by the Church recalling the wise men following the light of the star and coming to see the Christ Child. Monday was the Festival of Epiphany, a day of the church year when, in the midst of the darkness of winter, the message is one of light. There is Light for this world - a land immersed in the darkness of death. Jesus, the Son of God, has come, and He is the Light of the world. He is come to destroy death and to take away all darkness. That is particularly true for you who sit here this wintry day in January. There is a message of hope from God for you - Good News concerning Dee - Good News for you. Please listen again to one verse of the Gospel Reading which was read a few moments ago and ponder the question ...

... Got Time for Another Cup?

"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great Light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

That there is darkness in this world and in your life are not difficult truths to convince you of at this time. The reality is before us here as this casket reminds us. It was true when Adam and Eve were escorted out of the Garden of Eden and especially so when they were confronted with the death of their son, Abel. It was true in the time when John the Baptizer was arrested, even as he awaited the end of his life in prison. It is true today as one generation gives way to next generation. And we know that it will be true for still another generation and we know it will be the situation for each one of us here.

What causes this darkness? Certainly death, but also what leads up to death. There is our sin and there is the devil. In addition, and as a result, there is the pain, the sorrow and the suffering of both body and soul. Dee knew that and you know it and I know it.

But behold, there is Good News, for God knows it too, and He would have neither the world nor each person within this world sit in darkness and die forever. Therefore, God sent His Son into the world in order to be and in order to provide the way for each and for all to sit no longer in darkness but to live in the Light. Jesus came to be the Light of the world. That is what LaVerne believed and what Dee believed and this Good News was their hope that extended beyond this world and which they now behold in eternity.

Jesus, Who is true God and true man, came into this world for all people, especially for you. The LORD God Almighty would do what was necessary in order that you might no longer be in darkness but have His Light. What would that take? Well, it would take Jesus defeating the Devil, which Christ did do for you. It would take Jesus paying for every one of your sins of deed, of word and even of thought, which Christ did do for you when He suffered on the cross. It would mean suffering hell, which Jesus did do for you that you might not have to spend one second in that God-forsaken place. This was the cup of suffering that Jesus drank the dregs of that cup in your place.

In order that LaVerne and Dee and you might not sit in darkness it would mean the Son of God would have to hang on the cross and die in darkness for you and be placed in a dark, still tomb of death for you, which He did and which He was. It would take the defeat of death itself for you to see the Light and this Jesus the Christ did when He rose again from the dead on Easter morning and with Him bringing the light of a new day.

This is the Christian faith; which except someone believe faithfully and firmly, that person cannot be saved. This is the Christian faith; which both LaVerne and Dee believed and confessed. This Good News of Christ crucified and risen is what they believed and what gave them the confident joy that permitted them to say to God in faith - "yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Psalm 23).

Jesus, Who is true God and true man, came into this world for all people, especially for you. Whenever He came to a place then could it be said that "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great Light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." The Good News of Christ came to the places of Bible times and the people no longer sat in darkness, but lived in the Light of God's love.

This happened for Dee when the Lord came to her and called her His own. She was baptized and she continued to be forgiven of all her sins in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Because of Christ's cup of suffering that He drank for the world, Dee was invited to drink from the Cup of Blessing from the Table of the Lord. She drank that cup at church in the Holy Communion.

Thus Dee and LaVerne no longer maintain membership here at Our Redeemer in the Church militant. They now belong to the Church triumphant in heaven. What will this be like for those whose bodies and souls have been commended into the nail-pierced hands of the Savior? There will be no darkness or shadow of darkness - only the light. Listen to the description given to us by the

Apostle John in the last book of the Bible:

"Then He showed me the river of the Water of Life, bright as crystal, flowing from the Throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the Tree were for the healing of the nations. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His Name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the LORD God will be their Light, and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5).

So there you have it, as you sit here in the Presence of the LORD and hear His Word of Good News for you. You are invited to ponder all these things this day, but not this day only, not just for the day of Dee's funeral. I beg you to consider what the LORD God Almighty has done for you that you might be with Him in eternity. Please consider this every day, especially after you pour yourself that second cup of coffee and before you sit down to drink it. Surely you've got time for that other cup, don't you?

The sermon text once again is Matthew 4:16 - "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great Light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." Amen.