

"You Are Not Without Hope"

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

18 March Anno Domini 2003

Funeral Sermon at the Gravesite Committal Service for
Mary Elizabeth (nee Wylie) McCoy

born -- September 7, 1921

baptized -- April 25, 2002

entered eternity -- March 12, 2003

Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Crawford Cemetery, Battle Ground, Washington

Dearly Beloved,

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

Concerning the matters of eternal life and salvation and heaven, there are two groups of people who walk the face of this earth - those with hope and those without hope. As we have come together here alongside the casket containing the mortal remains of Mary McCoy, those matters are brought to the front of our minds. Standing for a time here at the grave site of Mom; indeed, of Grandma McCoy causes us to think of eternity and of paradise.

But do we stand here as those with hope or those without hope? In other words, do you stand here as one with hope or one without hope? So often is that particular question asked and anticipated that God has given us the answer in the Bible. The Apostle Paul wrote the answer in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14. Please listen to those two verses and hear the truth that ...

... *"You Are Not Without Hope."*

But we would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

We are standing a hundred feet from a paved road that brought us and Mom's casket to this cemetery. This was, if understood properly, Mom's last trip up here on this road. Before it was a paved road, it was a gravel road and before that it was a dirt road. Before that it was but two ruts leading over this hill and into the woods on ahead and the valley below. At that time, some 70+ years ago, Mom traveled this road for the first time. She was a little girl whose father had died and she came here from Portland with her mother and her step-father. As the years and decades went by, a tough life got tougher, especially as she had to raise three boys alone in a one-room shack that didn't even have a bathroom. This she did with a stubbornness born of necessity and a love that sacrificed much for three boys who had been abandoned by our father. Joe, Tim and I cannot imagine a tougher, more dedicated, self-sacrificing mom.

Now, having said that, each of us knows that she was not a perfect mom, not a perfect grandmother, not a perfect person. Three boys were always into something and doing something, often what was not according to Mom's wish and desire. We knew that she could really become angry. At times she would grab a leather belt and come after one of us. We also knew that we did not want her to hit us with that belt when she was mad, so there were times we had to have her chase us a bit - a sort of cooling off time - though the words she muttered may not have been a counting to ten. We discovered they were more of a count-down to a judgment day of sorts. Deeds, words and God only knows what went through her mind. Perfect? God knows that she wasn't.

However, the perfect God had a perfect place and He wanted everyone - Mom included - you included - me included - to be there. The problem was that not one of us is perfect and not one of us would make it. It was our problem, not God's. Still the LORD took our problem on Himself. In order for us to be perfect in God's sight now and perfect in God's court on Judgment Day, we needed to be forgiven of our sinful nature and all our sins ... whether ones of deed, of word and even of thought. Neither Mom, nor you, nor me, nor anyone could work this problem out - no could even begin working on it.

So, as we stand here in front of Mom's casket, are we those with hope or those without hope? Know this, dearly beloved, ...

... You Are Not Without Hope.

While we couldn't work this problem out, God could and did. He sent His Son to be our Savior. Jesus, Who is God and man, came into this world as a baby in Bethlehem to be the Way for us to go to heaven. Christ Jesus hung on the cross and paid the price for the sins of the world ... for Mom's, for yours, for mine. He died for all and rose again from the dead three days later. Then the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven and now calls His own to come home to Him and be with Him in that perfect place where there is no sin, no suffering, no pain, no sorrow.

So, as we stand here, are we those with hope or those without hope? Once again, know this, dearly beloved, ...

... You Are Not Without Hope.

God worked faith in Mom's hearts to believe this Good News of God. The Apostles' Creed that we spoke together a few moments ago is a statement of the Christian faith. When told this statement of the faith she said that this is what she believed. After that, less than a year ago, on April 25th, she was baptized. Whether one is baptized on the first day of life or after 80 years, God is faithful to His Word of hope. The Bible has a promise that became effective in Mom's life: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). That promise was not intended for her only, but as it is written in the Word of God: "The promise is for you and for your children" (Acts 2:39).

Last Wednesday Mom fell asleep in Christ and woke up with the LORD in heaven. According to the Bible we may grieve and mourn our loss, but we don't have to weep as those who have no hope. Mom is with her Lord and she awaits us in Paradise.

Our last day on this earth is coming. Of that each one here is aware of that today. That road behind

you is going to take each of us from this cemetery and to various places in this world. Sooner or later, each one of us will return - if not to this particular cemetery - certainly to a plot of ground like this. Please know that, according to the Bible, as you leave here today ...

... *You Are Not Without Hope.*

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 - But we would not have you ignorant, brothers, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. Amen.