

"In Memoriam + Dorothy Schrupp"

Revelation 21:3-4

May 23, 2005

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Boise, Idaho

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I. Words of the World

The Word of the Lord from Revelation 21:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:3-4)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Tears. Sorrow. Pain. Death. These are words of this world-this fallen world. Tears instead of joy. Sorrow instead of rejoicing. Pain instead of happiness. And, of course, death instead of life. Each of these words proclaims the ravages of sin upon this world.

Tears, sorrow, pain, death: St. John knew them all when he wrote this text by the inspiration of God. He wrote from the prison island of Patmos, exiled and cut off from fellow believers. He wrote to Christians who suffered from the many faces of sin. There were the pleasant temptations to coax them away from their Savior. There was persecution launched by unbelievers inside and outside of the church. And, of course, there was always the ongoing threat of sickness, injury and death. No matter the devil's strategy, whether inviting or repelling, each sin was designed to separate people from God, to leave them forsaken and lost. It's not easy to be faithful in the midst of tears, sorrow, pain and death. Without the grace of God, it can't be done.

And so St. John declared His vision of heaven and the hope of the Christian: no matter what they saw with their eyes or experienced in their bodies, the Lord was faithful. Christ had become flesh, born of Mary. He'd gone to the cross to redeem them from sin. He'd risen again to conquer death, then ascended into heaven to prepare a place for them. In the meantime, He was not far away. He was visiting His people by His Word, forgiving their sins and strengthening their faith. Though unseen, He was with them in their suffering. And because of His faithfulness, the time would come when they would be delivered. The time would come when they would see Him in His glory. The time would come when tears and sorrow and pain and death would be called former things. They would pass away, but the people of God would not.

That was the Word of the Lord that John proclaimed, and the Word was faithful and true.

Tears, sorrow, pain and death. It's no secret that these infest the world. There are still pleasant memories along the way, but weeping comes to all. You and I know that, at least academically. We see it on the news, happening to people "out there somewhere" on any given night, and we've

conditioned ourselves to deal with that; if we didn't, we would quickly go mad. Distantly, we accept the academic truth that these are all the results of sin. Perhaps in a vague sort of way, we acknowledge that Jesus died on the cross because of sin. When things are going well, all of this seems pleasantly irrelevant. It all fits together in a Sunday school book and life goes on.

But sooner or later, inevitably, tears and sorrow and pain and death invade our lives and seek to pierce our hearts. Such is the case this day: for we are not here to discuss the existence of evil somewhere out there. We are gathered here because a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, friend and sister in Christ has died.

The diagnosis was first made three years ago, with the dreaded announcement of cancer. The clock was on, and that disease-that fearful manifestation of sin-was at work to rob Dorothy. It sought to rob her of her health, her energy, her dignity, and eventually her life. Predictions were not promising, but it is the Lord who numbers our days and Dorothy was granted a blessed extra three years that many would not have predicted. However, six months ago the diagnosis was renewed, and it was only a matter of time. Cancer and the accompanying infection waged a heartless, relentless war. On Tuesday, May 17, Dorothy was robbed of her life in this world. You were robbed of her company. That is what sin does: it seeks to rob of all that God gives you. It seeks to divide and isolate you, eventually into the desolation of the grave. There is a time when the tears and the sorrow and the pain and the death become very real and very personal indeed.

It comes as a terrible shock. We are subtly conditioned to deny death's existence for as long as possible, pretend it's only an abstract, "out there" sort of thing. But that is only to deny reality. Death isn't content with generalities, but comes to each person. It came to Dorothy. It's undeniable. That is why you grieve this day, and death and devil would have you believe that you are forsaken, that there is no comfort and there is no hope.

II. The Word of the Lord for St. Dorothy

But you must always, always remember: the devil is the greatest of liars, and death is the sorest of losers. You mourn this day, yes; because in this fallen world, grief and love go hand in hand. But dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you do not grieve as those who have no hope, for we proclaim this hope this day: the Lord doesn't just deal with generalities either, but seeks and saves individuals personally. Yes, we give thanks that He died to redeem the world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. But far more than that on this day, we give thanks that He specifically died to redeem Dorothy Schrupp, so that she might have everlasting life.

Every promise that Jesus makes to all of His people, He makes to each individual, too. You have heard many of these promises today. The Lord is not just a shepherd: He is specifically Dorothy's shepherd. Throughout her time in this world, He faithfully tended to her. He provided her all that she needed for this body and life, including a loving husband, children and grandchildren. He didn't stop there, though: He provided her with all that she needed for eternal life. As promised in Psalm 23, He led her beside the still waters of Holy Baptism. There, He wrote His name on her; and there, He wrote her name in the Book of Life. He declared, "Dorothy, I have died for you and I have risen for you; and here, in Baptism, I have made you my own. In the years ahead, you will face joys and sorrows both, but on this you have My Word: you are My beloved child, and I will never leave you nor forsake you." The Lord kept His promise: He led her in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, giving her a steady diet of His life-giving Word. He fed her with His body and blood for the

forgiveness of sins, to strengthen and preserve her in the one true faith unto life everlasting. This took place even in the presence of her enemies: even in a fourth floor hospital room, the Lord faithfully said to Dorothy, "This is My body, given for you. This is My blood shed for you. Not just for people, Dorothy, but for you. You are My beloved child, and I will not let you go."

The promises did not stop there. Back in Isaiah 25, He declared He would swallow up death forever, wipe the tears from the eyes of His people and remove their rebuke. Dear friends, He said that to Dorothy. He said, "My beloved child, I will remove your rebuke. You will not be called 'cancer patient' forever; you will be called 'holy' and 'healed,' 'resurrected' and 'restored.' You see, I've gone to the cross to swallow up death for you, Dorothy; and I will wipe every tear from your eyes.

In John 14, Jesus said to Dorothy, "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. Dorothy, I am your way, your truth, your life. By me, you will come to the Father for eternity."

And on that terrible last Tuesday evening, the last words to Dorothy before her final breath were the words of our Lord from John 11: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (Jn. 11:25-26). In John 11, Jesus said this to Martha. Last Tuesday night, He said it to Dorothy; for when He went to the cross to redeem the world, He went to the cross to redeem her.

We do not deal with abstract platitudes and empty comfort this day, for such are no match for grave and devil. No, we rejoice that this Word of the Lord is fulfilled for Dorothy Schrupp: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." That is your comfort as you grieve Dorothy's death: for her, for the sake of Jesus, the tears and the sorrow and the pain and the death are all former things. For her, they are forgotten history. She is delivered to everlasting life, where the Lord wipes every tear from her eyes.

It is more than your comfort. It is your hope-not just for Dorothy, but for you. As Christ went to the cross to die for the sins of Dorothy and redeem her, so also He went to the cross for your sins, to redeem you. As He made these promises to her, so He has made them to you. For now, you are still in this world of wretched tears and sorrow, pain and death. But you are not without hope. The Lord declares that He has redeemed you, that He will deliver you to everlasting life where trouble is only a former thing.

He does this for the sake of Jesus, and this Word is faithful and true.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen