

# "The Preparations Jesus Made for You"

John 14:2-3

The Funeral Sermon in Memory of  
Erna Cook

22 November Anno Domini 2005  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church of Emmett, Idaho  
Pastor Michael L. McCoy

Dear family members of Erna, her friends, neighbors and congregational members,

May God's grace, mercy and peace ever be yours in the Name of the LORD our God - in the Name of the Father and of the ... Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dearly Beloved,

Nearly twenty years ago, on March 14, 1986, Erna filled out a sheet with the preferences for her funeral. She listed her preferences for the readings which she wanted you to hear today and she had a list of some eight hymns that could be chosen from for the service. The hymn we just sang, "I Am But A Stranger Here," is one of them, and "I Know That My Redeemer Lives," which we will sing in a few minutes was another – a hymn which proclaims the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead and His defeat of death.

While here in this life, Erna was a Lutheran; that is, she was a Christian. She came to Church to be in the Presence of the LORD God, to hear that she was forgiven of all her sins and to receive the gifts that God graciously showers upon those who repent of their sin and look to Christ for grace, mercy and peace. This she received. Erna desired to hear the Word of God and had copies of the services on DVD and video cassette that she watched with hymnal in hand and heard that Jesus died on the cross for all of her sins. She listened to the CDs that were provided, including an audio book titled, "Preparing for Death." She had a holy hunger for the Lord's Supper and whenever I stopped by with the Sacrament, she would pull out her hymnal from the table next to her chair and we would sing a hymn or two as part of the liturgy for the Holy Communion.

In addition, for her funeral service, she wanted the pastor, whoever he might be, to prepare and to preach a sermon to you on a very specific text, John 14:2-3. Please listen to that section of the Bible and ponder . . .

. . . "The Preparations Jesus Made for You."

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 unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God; that is, thus far the words of Jesus.

Jesus is not just a good man, or a fine teacher, or a great person. He is, of course, all these, but He is infinitely more. He is the Son of God; that is, He is true God – eternal, omnipotent, almighty. He was

sent by the Father into this fallen world to be its Savior and Redeemer. He was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. That's what Christmas is all about – God born in Bethlehem. Then Jesus lived the perfect life that you and I are expected and commanded to live, but don't. Jesus grew up and was an adult man.

That's when Jesus spoke these words: 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 unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Notice that Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for us. That means that neither Erna, nor you, nor I, nor anyone in the world would be able to prepare a place for ourselves in the mansions of heaven. It would take perfection and, as you are fully aware, no one born of a man and a woman is perfect. Not only are there things that we do which are sin, so are those sins that we don't do but are commanded to do. Even imperfect thoughts render a soul unfit for heaven. So, no one is able to earn the way to heaven, and any attempt to do so and any sort of preparations we undertake to impress God and to earn His favor is a rejection of Christ, both Who He is, and what He has done, for us to be in heaven.

Jesus said that He was going to prepare a place for us. In order to do so, He doesn't pack up His suitcase and zip up into heaven. No indeed. To prepare a place for us He has a specific course to follow. In order for Erna, or you, or me, or anyone to ascend to the joys of the Father's heaven, Jesus must descend to the sorrows of this fallen world. In order to remove the curse from us, Jesus must become a curse in our place. In order to be forgiven of all our sins, Jesus must take all our sins upon Himself and then pay the awful price of all of them. This He did when He was crucified and when He hung from the cross.

There, on that cursed, barren, leafless tree He was preparing a place for us in our Father's House. To the repentant thief who prayed to God, "Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom," Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He bought us back, He redeemed us from sin and from an eternity apart from Him, which is hell. This is what Erna believed and confessed. This is what gave her a joyful hope in the dark days of the past year and what sustained her soul in the long hours of the painful nights.

Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us in our Father's House. In order to do so, He died on the cross and His Body was placed in a tomb of death. It did not look like He was going anywhere, let alone to prepare a place for us. But behold, on the third day Jesus the Christ rose again from the dead. That grave could not keep Him, for He is God and He was going to prepare a place for us. If the cross tells us that our sins have been paid for and that God's wrath has found satisfaction in Christ's crucifixion, then the empty tomb on Easter morning shouts the truth that death has been defeated and that those who depart this life trusting in Christ, are with the Lord where He is, just as Erna now is. It is also the promise that, on the last day, our bodies will be raised from the dead and united with us and we will be with the Lord forever in our Father's House. Is it any wonder why Erna wanted us to sing, "I Know that My Redeemer Lives"?

Following His sin-atonement Death and His death-defeating Resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven in the final preparations necessary for Erna, for you, for me, and for everyone. All things are now ready and Christ has given to His Church the means for granting people the gift of faith and of making them children of God and heirs of heaven. This takes place through Baptism, which is for

you and for your children. In Baptism God calls you His own and gives His gifts to you. Jesus said, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." This is what Erna believed and it was so from the very day of her Baptism.

The Church is given the authority to forgive sins and this is what Erna heard when she came to Church – namely, that she was forgiven of all her sins in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. When she was no longer able to come to Church, the Ministry of the Word came to her and she heard the same Word of forgiveness as she prepared for and received the Body and the Blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. Is it any wonder that Erna could commend herself – her body and soul – into the nail-pierced hands of the Lord and depart in peace according to the promise of Jesus Who said, 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 unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also?

So here we are this day. A generation of the Cook Family has now entered eternity. The next generation now steps forward and toes the line. Each member thereof awaits that one day that will come sooner or later. Dearly beloved, all preparations have been made for each one. Not everyone, however, cares. How about you? How about your children? I implore you. I plead with you. I beg you, that if you have neglected the spiritual care of yourself and your family, to not let such continue another week, or another day, or even another hour.

God will have the last Word. Listen to the Gospel Reading once again, noting as you listen that three things that are certain – one, God in Christ has died for all your sins and prepared the way for you to be with Him forever in heaven; and two, there will come a day when your coffin will not be empty; and three, you either will, or you will not, receive the promised blessings because of all . . .

. . . "The Preparations Jesus Made for You."

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.' Thomas saith unto Him, 'Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?' Jesus saith unto him, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me'" (John 14:1-6). Amen.

Thanks be to God for Erna, Who is, according to the Promise of the God, with the LORD in those many mansions of the Father's House. Amen.