

Memorial Service for Lydia Kraft

Born January 6, 1945, Died September 27, 2010

Message by Dr. Steve Hereford

I must confess to you that this has been the hardest message for me to prepare.

All week I have been thinking about what to say.

Even yesterday as I sought to work my mind was filled with sadness.

I told Theresa that I still can't believe she's not here anymore.

As I put together the slide show, I kept stopping to look at each picture and remember many of the moments when they occurred.

Many of you have probably thought the same thing.

All of us have been faced with the reality of something that is inevitable: death.

Friday while I was at the bookstore, I was looking for a cover to use for the booklet we gave you this afternoon.

You'll notice on the cover it says, "Be still, and know that I am God." (Ps.46:10).

When I first read that I thought this state's best what is needed to be said today.

To know that God is who He says He is in the Bible is to understand that He is in control of everything.

That helps when we experience things we don't understand.

That helps us today.

Lydia's death may have come sudden but it was no surprise to God.

In fact it was about 3 weeks ago when we were told she only had 6 months left to live.

I was angry when I heard that only because I don't know how it helps being told you're going to die in such and such a time.

But as I think about now, I think I can see why a doctor would say this....to prepare them....to help them to make arrangements to leave this world.

Many people die with no prior notice.

I heard of a preacher that was preaching and he said he could die today and after he finished preaching and went and sat down, he fell over and died.

Some of us may walk out of here today and later be standing before God.

But understand none of us will die outside our appointed time.

The author of Ecclesiastes made this declaration: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die” (Eccl.3:1-2a).

Likewise the author of Hebrews says, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb.9:27).

Notice the language of Scripture.

It speaks of death in terms of a “purpose under heaven” and of an “appointment.”

Death is a divine appointment.

It is part of God’s purpose for our lives.

God calls each person to die.

And He is sovereign over all of life, including the final experiences of life.

The Bible says in **Deuteronomy 32:39 (NASB)** ‘See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life...’

Erwin Lutzer says, “Imagine staring in the face of Christ! Just the two of you, one-on-one! Your entire life is present before you. In a flash you see what He sees. No hiding. No opportunity to put a better spin on what you did. No attorney to represent you. The look in His eyes says it all. Like it or not, that is precisely where you and I shall someday be.”¹

As we think about all of this today, I want to share with you a perspective we all need to have.

As I already stated, death is inevitable for all us.

All of us will one day die.

There is no escaping death.

And I think leading up to Lydia’s death, I’m sure she gave this much thought.

I know some years ago we talked about this on the steps at my house.

¹ Erwin Lutzer, *Your Eternal Reward* (Chicago: Moody, 1998). 23.

She had a lot of questions about heaven and salvation.

I remember after that conversation how encouraged I was because we had never had a conversation regarding the depths of these things like then.

I remember another conversation we had where I shared with her how to know for certain when you die that you will be in heaven.

She took all this to heart.

A couple of Christmas' ago, before we opened any presents (if that didn't take hours to do), she began asking a series of questions to the grandkids like, "Does anyone know the purpose of Christmas?" "Can you tell me who Jesus is?"

I sat there in amazement and with much joy because I saw "a new creation" before my eyes.

Lydia had a lot of fears.

And one of them was speaking in front of people.

I remember when she was ready to join the church, she was frightened she would have to share anything publicly with the class but she did.

Along with several people in our new member's class she confessed Jesus as her Lord and Savior.

The next Christmas she shared even more.

I saw a new faith that was growing.

The Christian faith though is not without its struggles or trials.

She, as the rest of us, had them.

She wrote in her journal, "I am afraid always that I am not saved---that God does not want me for I have sinned too much and have not done my part enough. Therefore He has washed His hands of me."

How many of us have said the same thing?

She later wrote, "I am unworthy. Please forgive me."

As a believer you are constantly reminded of your sin and of the unworthiness of His salvation.

David said in Psalm 51 as he was confessing his sin, "Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" (v.11).

He also stated in **Psalms 42:9 (NASB)** I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

Erwin Lutzer again wrote, "We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners."

The new birth doesn't take away the fact that we are sinners but it does promise that God has according to Psalm 103:12 "removed our transgressions from us."

The psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps.103:12).

Now that promise is not for everyone.

It is only for those who place all their trust in Christ alone.

It is for those who love Him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

In being still and knowing that God is God, "every fear is stilled, every anxiety quieted. His people can relax. He is God. His cause is victorious. He is supreme among the nations, supreme over all the earth."²

"This twin command to not panic and to recognize His sovereignty is probably directed to both His nation for comfort and all other nations for warning."³

But as verses 1-3 state it personally, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Is your heart troubled?

Does this event cause you to think about your own mortality?

As certain as I am standing here this afternoon, you will one day die and after this you will stand in judgment for your life.

So does this moment grip you with fear?

Or do you have the same thought as the apostle Paul who said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Before we conclude, I want to share with you what Lydia is experiencing right now.

When a believer dies immediately he or she enters God's presence.

² William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Logos).

³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible: Psalm 46:10*.

They are as 2 Corinthians 5:8 says “absent from the body and...present with the Lord.”

Immediately they are in His presence.

There are no delays.

Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with Me in paradise” (Lk.23:43).

So for the believer this is a homecoming.

This is the completion of their salvation.

They enter as Jesus stated in John 14:2 “the Father’s house.”

Death then for the believer is a perfect experience with a perfect God.

It is forever.

It is unlike life now.

Worship is perfect.

There is no more pain, sorrow, sickness or death and no more sin.

Revelation 21:4 says, “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.”

So how can I be assured of heaven?

How can I know when I die that I too will go to heaven?

You must first repent of your sin.

You might not see yourself as a sinner or might be thinking “I am really not that bad of a person. In fact I know people far worse than me.”

But is your goodness enough to get you in heaven?

The Bible says of God in Habakkuk 1:13, “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor.”

In other words, God is holy and nothing unholy will be allowed in His presence.

Psalms 1:4-5 (NASB) ⁴The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

Ask yourself a few questions and see if you're ready for heaven.

First, have you ever told a lie?

Have you ever stolen anything?

Have you ever used God's name in vain?

Have you ever looked at someone with lust?

If your answer is yes to even just one of these you're guilty of breaking God's Law and are in danger of His judgment.

Consider this a courtroom and you have been declared guilty of a crime.

The law will now carry out its full fury on you.

The Judge says you're guilty and now you will be sentenced.

All of us will stand before the Judge of all the earth.

In righteousness He will judge us according to our deeds.

If we have broken just one of His commandments He will declare us guilty and carry out His sentence upon us.

You may have not murdered anyone but have you hated?

You may have not committed adultery but have you lusted after a woman or a man?

Jesus said in **Matthew 5:21-22 (NASB)** ²¹ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' ²² "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

He said in **Matthew 5:27-28 (NASB)** ²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The issue is our hearts and therefore we must repent or turn away from our sin and turn to Jesus Christ who paid our fine for breaking God's laws.

The Bible says in **Acts 4:12 (NASB)** "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus Himself said in **John 14:6 (NASB)** "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

When Jesus died on the cross, He died for you and me.

He paid the ultimate price for our sins and then arose the third day.

So listen for a moment: "When you come to Christ, you do not come to give, you come to receive. You do not come to try your best, you come to trust. You do not come just to be helped, but to be rescued. You do not come to be made better (although that does happen), you come to be made alive!"⁴

And that's what happens when you repent and surrender your life to Jesus Christ.

He makes you a new person.

Lydia was just that---a new person in Christ.

What did she look forward to? Heaven!

Why?

Because she trusted in Jesus to take away her sin and grant her eternal life.

R.C. Sproul, in his book "Surprised By Suffering," says, "When God wipe[s] away tears, it will be the end of all crying. When God dries our eyes from all sorrowful weeping, the consolation will be permanent. There will then be no reason for mournful tears. Death will be no more. There will be no sorrow, no pain whatever. These discomforts belong to the former things that shall pass away.

The New Jerusalem will have no cemeteries. There will be no morgue, no funeral parlor, no hospital, no painkilling drugs. These are the elements that attend the travail of this world. They will all pass away...

If anything sounds too good to be true, it is the announcement of a place where pain, sorrow, tears, and death are banished. The heart almost faints at the thought of it. We are almost afraid to think of it, lest we set ourselves up for a bitter disappointment. But the commanding voice from the throne of God spoke decisively to John. 'Write it down!' He ordered. 'These words are faithful and true.'"⁵

⁴ Erwin Lutzer, How You Can Be Sure You Will Spend Eternity With God, 45.

⁵ R.C. Sproul, Surprised By Suffering, 120.

It's attractive to want to go to heaven when you die but are you willing to give up your life to have it?

Matthew 16:24-26 (NASB) ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵ "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Let's pray.