

Funeral Service Stiena Feyter

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Bible Text: Revelation 21:1-8
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We are gathered here together today to grieve the loss of a beloved daughter, wife, mother, grandmother and friend, to bring our grief before the Lord and to give thanks to the Lord for the life that he has given and for the promise that he has given that all those who trust and love in him die in the sure hope of eternal life.

The songs that we will sing today as part of this service were selected by the family, especially by Stiena as songs that were meaningful to her. We will begin by singing Psalter 240, stanzas one, four and five. And in this Psalter we find that cry to the Lord in grief for help. And then the next song we will sing right after that is on the next page of your program. It is called *He Leadeth Me* and that song talks about the comfort of God's leading and goodness.

[singing]

For our Scripture reading we will turn to the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, chapter 21 and we will read verses one through eight and those verses have also been printed the program for you.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his

God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.¹

For our confession of faith I will read to you Lord's Day one of our Heidelberg Catechism that summarizes everything the Bible says, really, about what it means to be a Christian and a follower of the Lord.

What is your only comfort in life and death? That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins and delivered me from all the power of the devil and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head, yes, that all things must be subservient to my salvation and therefore by his Holy Spirit he also assures me of eternal life and makes me sincerely willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Let us respond to the Scripture reading and confession of faith by singing Psalter 100.

[singing]

Let us pray together.

Gracious and mighty God, we come to thy throne of grace during this service to bring our grief and our sadness to thee that we know from the pages of the Scriptures that even the Lord Jesus Christ while he lived on earth shed tears as he walked to the graveside of his friend Lazarus. Even though he is the resurrection and the life and though he has promised that all those who love him will rise from the dead and will be reunited with one another and most of all with thee, so we bring our grief to thee, Lord. Our hearts are breaking and we feel the loss. And in the weeks and years to follow we will feel the empty place so keenly sometimes. We pray for the strength and the health of thy gracious Holy Spirit and thy presence, especially for Franz who has lost his beloved wife, his companion, his helper, his support, his encouragement. We thank thee for giving Stiena to Franz for all the years they had together. We pray for him, Lord. Encourage him. Strengthen him. Be his companion. We pray that the special promises made in the Scriptures to those who are widows or widowers may support him and comfort him during this time. We pray for Stiena's mother, Mrs. [?] who has lost now a daughter as well as grandchildren whose heart is also breaking. Lord, comfort her with the promises of thy precious Word, with thy own presence and nearness that she may be strengthened and be able to carry her sorrow in thy care. We pray for the children and the grandchildren, the whole family circle, the friends, the employees of Forma Steel and Structural System Designs and all those who are gathered with us. We bring our grief looking and asking for thy sympathy and thy help. We come also to give thanks. This is a sorrowful day and yet it is also a joyful day for we give thanks for all that thou hast given to us in giving us Stiena, for the spiritual example and encouragement she was to so

¹ Revelation 21:1-8.

many of us. We thank thee for the fact that her suffering is now over and we no longer have to see her suffering with that twist in our stomach and grief in our thoughts. We thank thee for granting her her heart's desire which was to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We thank thee that in Jesus Christ death has lost its sting for all those who trust in him and are redeemed by him that faith becomes sight, that sin is gone, that sorrow is over, that eternal joy and gladness begins. We wouldn't wish her back knowing that thou hast promised to her and has given to her. And we thank thee that we may grieve, not as those without hope, but as those with hope. Great is thy faithfulness. In thy sovereign grace thou hast dried her tears and kept her from falling and has answered the prayers that we sang already for mercy. We thank thee for all the spiritual comfort and encouragement given to thee by her especially the last five years as she suffered from cancer. How often she reminded us that she was doing well, because she was being led by thy hand. She was satisfied with thee and with thy grace and with thy goodness to her and thy faithfulness to her. Lord, we pray that we, by thy grace, may also live a life of trust in thee and of witness to others of how good the Lord is. Some of us sit here, Lord, with questions or wondering why. Perhaps some of us as employees wondering why someone who had such an important place in the work place and in the home and in the family circle and in the congregation was taken so humanly speaking early. And we pray those questions may be answered in the light of the Scriptures today, that all those who do not know this Savior personally, whether members of a church or not, may through thy Holy Spirit's ministry hear the gospel during this service and be drawn to believe in it and to confess the same Savior in whose strength Stiena lived and died and in whose strength it is safe and blessed for anyone to live and to die. We pray, Lord, make our hearts soft and sensitive and tender to the Word of God. For we know that it is appointed to everyone of us one day to die and that the wages of sin are death, but that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ to all those who trust in thee. So we pray that the Word of God may do its work. Stiena's greatest wish was that her children and grandchildren and all she knew would know the same Savior she did. Lord, we have that same request today. We pray grant it to us and we know that all of us are sinners as defined by thy Word and law, that no one can have a hope of eternal life because of what they have done, because of in our eyes being a good person. We confess that it is grace and only grace that anyone ever enters heavenly joys and glory. Speak to us, Lord. Provide for us. Open the Scriptures to us. Grant the pastor the filling of the Holy Spirit that he may explain this Word rightly and apply it to our hearts and consciences and needs. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear family and friends of Stiena, we are here to bring our joy and our gratitude and our grief and our need before God, the God who has made us, the God who determines the day of our birth and the day of our death. And this service is especially about remembering and thinking about God. This is not going to be a Stiena centered service. She didn't want that. She deliberately when I spoke to her about this, asked me not to do so. She didn't want to be the center of attention even at her own funeral service. And having said this, we would dishonor God if we did not publically acknowledge him and thank him for everything he gave us when he gave us Stiena. She was a beloved daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, sister, sister in the Lord to our congregation and an important part in the founding and operating of Structural Truss Systems and Forma Steel.

What did God give us when he gave us Stiena? He gave us someone who was often a peace maker, a perseverer, someone who was faithful, someone who had strong convictions and was able to speak about them and yet in a gentle and in a non judgmental way. She seldom complained. And even as I visited her every week the last few months she didn't complain even when in obvious pain and I would say to her, "How are you doing?"

She would say, "Good."

And I had to ask specific questions to find out how she was doing physically and so did the doctor even after a night of sleepless pain. The doctor asked how she is doing. She would say, "Good." Her husband would have to gently correct her and say, "Honey, he is not asking about your soul. He is asking about your body."

By the grace of God that is who she was. In her family circle she had such an important role spiritually. She loved to sing, to sing for others, to sing with others. And that is why the songs that were selected for this service were her favorites and she wanted you to understand what was her hope and her life even as you sang these things or heard them today.

She loved to speak of the goodness of God to the family especially the last five years as she battled cancer. And in that sense she was a real source of encouragement and stability to you as a family, wasn't she? And her absence will be felt deeply by all, especially by her husband. The Lord gave you just the right woman for you.

Stiena loved being part of the family business. She loved to be generous. She loved to meet the needs of her employees. She often said that the best day at work was payday where she could make sure that paychecks were handed out.

Some of you as employees have questions as you think about everything she meant in the workplace and in her family and you wonder: Why does someone like this have to die so young comparatively speaking? And you have asked your boss, even: Why is it that good people die? And Stiena wanted you to hear some of the answers to your questions during this service. But do you know why we describe her life now as a gift of God? So that we would thank God. Yes, thankfulness is an important part of the funeral service, because every good thing we enjoy in the life of Stiena was the gift of God. He made her who she was. Every character trait or habit that was a blessing to us was the gift of God. And if God did not work good things in people's character and lives, this world would be all bad. It would be a living hell.

Why do we speak of her life this way, as a gift of God? So that we will remember the giver. The gift has been taken away other than in dearly cherished memories, that the giver God always remains and he will show his goodness to this family circle with other gifts. And he promises to fill the empty place with his own presence and companionship for all of those who trust in him and love him.

That is not to say that we want to present Stiena as a sinless saint. We have neither the right nor the ability to do so. And the confession of faith in Lord's Day one was read to you also at the request of Stiena. She wanted you to know how she thought of herself. Her only comfort in life and death was in her faithful Savior Jesus Christ who forgave her her sins, who preserved her throughout her life. And she would be the first to tell you that she was, in and of herself, a sinner who could not answer or earn heaven based on her own doing.

But that doesn't mean we need to mention her shortcomings now. God alone is the one who may call sin sin and forgive sin. That is his work and not ours.

And now as we think about her life and death and want to place that in the light of the Word of God, we sit here with mixed emotions, don't we? On the one hand we are thankful she is no longer suffering. Those of you who have seen her suffering the last five years, you have seen her body breaking down the last few weeks. And it has brought tears to your eyes. It is shocking as death always is and no matter how expected death is it is ugly every time, isn't it?

And death, inevitable though it is for all of us, raises questions and provokes soul searching. It forces you to consider ultimate issues. Who am I? Why am I here on earth? What does it mean life, death and suffering? Is there life beyond the grave? Is this the end? Is this all there is or is there more? Is there hope? And hope is one of the key things that you need to keep on living, don't you? Without hope you lose your ability to go on. Some of the most hopeless words of any language are, "There is no hope," some of the most despairing words. And yet death seems the ultimate hopelessness of all.

If all you consider is a body in a coffin, no amount of flowers, no amount of sympathy, no amount of nice words, thankful though the family is for all of them, can erase or hide the ugly finality of death. And if this life is all there is, all you are left with is fading memories that will be forgotten in a generation or two and be nothing more than a few statistics in history books. Are not our hopes and desires and dreams bigger than this? Do we not somehow instinctively feel as human beings that we were created for more than this? The ultimate in dignity, death.

The verses that were read to you from the Word of God give us a larger perspective in hope. We are presented in these words from Revelation chapter 21 with a hope that is big enough to embrace the entire universe and that is good news, not made up by creative people unable to accept the facts of life and death and trying to perfume the sting of death with silly man made myths. No, this is good news given to us by God himself, the God who cannot lie, deceive or exaggerate. This good news comes to us speaking of life beyond the grave, of eternal life that never ends for all those who know Jesus Christ as their Savior, for all those who trust in him and love him and follow him.

And Stiena confessed often that that was her hope. And, more importantly, she lived that way, too. That was her hope in life. That was her hope in death. She died triumphantly. Her death was not defeat. Cancer did not win. Her death was victory.

You may wonder: Why do people who are needed and loved die? If we are true believers in the Lord, the reason is gain, so that by the grace of God they can leave their temporary homes in this world and enter their eternal homes with him.

Some of us from the family were sitting yesterday and discussing the service today and I asked them. "Tell me about those last few minutes that you spent." And Franz prayed with his wife for those last 10 minutes, watching her face as he commended her to the Lord and repeated the Scriptures to her and her face was beaming with triumphant joy. And Franz said to me yesterday, "Those 10 minutes were the best 10 minutes of the last five years."

Not the death itself, for that remains painful also to believers, but what was so wonderful was the triumphant victorious way in which by the grace of God she passed the doorway of death to meet her Savior. Her death was not defeat. It was victory. And that is the hope that makes her husband and her family want to sing, also sing for joy today even though they will have their moments of tears, too. That is the beauty of the Word of God that we can sing a song of sorrow as well as a song of joy together. It is the balance of the Word of God. That is what makes her death good news, not just because she no longer suffers, but because she is with her Savior now, the one who makes and keeps every promise that we read together from this text.

As we consider this hope from out of Revelation chapter 21, we need to notice three things. First, we need to notice here a reality that we can all recognize. And these verses speak of eternal life in heaven using examples from this present world, as God often does in his Word, as well as a description of this present world that we live in that rings true to your own experience.

We are told here about a city, bringing to mind a crowd of people living in one place. We are told about a bride preparing herself and making herself as beautiful as she can for her husband. And you can almost see the love and excitement in that very description, that there is so much in ordinary life to be thankful for, isn't there? There are joys and pleasures and privileges to life on earth. God, our good creator created all these things not just for his pleasure, but for our pleasure so that we could share in his pleasure in the things that he has made.

Who can see a sunset or snow capped mountain without sensing how good it is to be in this world? The joys of creation and especially of family and friends are what make you want to live on earth forever, don't they?

But on the other hand, the verses we read point out that life in this world is not all sunsets, roses and moonlight. Verse four gives a catalog of the frustrations of being in this world. There are tears. Why? Because there is death. There is sorrow. There is

crying. There is pain. Every good thing in this world comes to an end. There are thorns on every rose, thorns on every moment.

Stiena was no stranger to this side of life, either. She came with her immigrant parents during those difficult years following World War II, those days when you couldn't be sure that you would see your family again, when there wasn't Skype and cheap phone calls and affordable air travel. In that generation had to work so hard to begin with little, to make due with little—although the Lord certainly richly blessed her later in life.

The tears of pain and struggle and labor are a part of life here, especially in these last five years as Stiena battled cancer and her body broke down and her health slowly failed and she fought that long painful battle. And you each could come with your own stories, stories that are summarized in these verses in verse four and five of the tears and the pain and the struggle. And it is this side of life that makes you want to say, sometimes, doesn't it? It would be good to leave is world.

Why is it this way on earth now? Not because this is how God created life to be, but because of our sin, our breaking of God's law as a human race, verse eight. This is why God has woven sorrow, pain, tears and death into his good world, because we are the things mentioned in verse eight. Me, first of all and you, too. And here we have a summary of what is wrong with this world, with our sin. It means being fearful of others instead of the creator, that is being more concerned with the smiles and frowns of other people than the smiles and frowns of God, being unbelieving of his words in which he gives us the necessary truth by which to live our lives. And whether that is pious unbelief or deliberately rebellious unbelief, unbelief is sin, being abominable—and that word means twisting—what God has created so that we do our own thing with it, rather than using it God's way. We do this with the precious gift of, as was mentioned in this verse, sexuality, of truth, life itself, of everything.

The greatest heartache and reason for tears in this world is what people do to each other. Because of these sins against a good God and each other, God has cursed us and this whole world. Creation shares in the pain, death and tears. Genesis three. The human race was created as the crown of God's creation and therefore that creation suffers in our fall.

Romans six verse 23.

“The wages of sin is death.”²

That is a paycheck that each one of us are earning. And you may want to argue the point and dismiss it, but you cannot dismiss or argue with tears and sorrow and pain and death.

And you may want to say, “But I am a good person. I try to do the right thing.”

² Romans 6:23.

How are you measuring that, by your own standards or God's, by comparing yourself to other people or to his laws? God insists on judging your life and mine based on his standard, not yours. And he has that right as God.

And if that is all we could say, we would have no more hope. But, thank God, there is more that can be said. Against the dark background of the bad news, the good news shines with all its clarity and beauty. And that is why we turn to the second point you need to see from these verses. We need to notice that in these verses, to such, to verse eight people living in this world of sorrow death and tears, God's makes promises so wonderful that we can hardly even find human words to imagine them or speak of them. He promises that this present world will pass away when Jesus Christ returns. He promises that there will be a new earth without the curse, that the whole universe will be remade so that suffering and death are gone. In fact, there is a place called heaven right now where all those who have died knowing Jesus Christ as their Savior are living in anticipation of that day, enjoying the down payment of the full inheritance that is to come.

There the life we read about in these verses is already happening and the anticipation is mounting for the final installment of all that God has promised.

What is heaven like? It is a God centered world. That needs to be said first. Too often people try to imagine a me centered world when thinking about heaven. For example, let's say that someone dies who loves golfing and fishing. Well, then their friends will imagine as they discuss the death that that person is playing endless rounds of golf and catching trophy fish. That is a me centered version of reality that entirely misses the point of heaven. And that is why this passage goes out of its way to emphasize something different, to emphasize that it is being with God that is the heart of heaven, that is the glory of heaven, that makes heaven wonderful, that the Lord is there.

We read in verse two that the apostle sees this holy city of God, the new Jerusalem or Zion as it is often called in the Bible, descending out of heaven. And the description here is not one of scientific measurement, of kilometers and population. No, the description is a love based description. We are seeing a bride here. And where there is a bride, there must be a bridegroom. His city symbolizes the redeemed people of God living together with their bridegroom on earth in a right relationship with God where there will be loving, intimate, caring, sharing of everything.

Isn't that what a great marriage is like? Nothing is mine anymore. Everything is ours though husband and wife. And so it is with the eternal spiritual marriage to God in heaven. Nothing that he has is just his anymore. It belongs to his bride as well. And that is why verse three goes on to tell us that the most important thing about heaven is that God is there. That is the best news of all, even more important than that there is no more pain and that there is no more death and that there is no more tears and no more sin. Isn't that what it is like to be a bride if you love someone?

A couple engaged to be married and counting the days, do they say to each other, “We can’t wait until we live in that apartment, in that home?”

No. What do they say most of all? It will be great to be forever and better live in a little shack together than have the mansion apart.

And that is the hope of everyone who loves in and trusts the Lord. This was also the reason why Stiena looked forward to death openly. And this makes her family now even joyful and thankful. They are rid of the pain of parting for a while.

Recently she was speaking to loved ones about funeral arrangements. She misspoke herself. She referred to it as the wedding rather than her funeral. But if you know the Bible and if you personally know the God of the Bible, that was not a slip of the tongue. It is a biblical hope.

The blessing of biblical Christianity, of being a true believer is that you can know for sure already in this life, that you can speak with great certainty about his hope. That is not presumptuous. That is believing what God has said in his Word. We cannot know people’s hearts, but we can know God’s Word. And God’s Word has said that all who live trusting in him and loving him have this hope and should speak to one another of his hope. You can know that this hope is yours through the work of Jesus Christ, that though the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ working in you. It would dishonor God not to say so.

Why is this love relationship stressed? Why would God’s own Son choose to love the kinds of people described in verse eight? Yes, he did. That is the most amazing news in the world, that Jesus Christ came into this world as the Son of God and added a real human nature to who he was as God. And he lived life on earth as we should have lived it and he died on the cross as we deserve to die. And on that cross God poured out and squeezed eternal hell into a few hours and he paid the price that sinners like me deserve. And the sin debt was paid for all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love him. And now there is an open doorway, opened by him, to this wonderful world promised in these verses.

God could have scrapped the human race and started over, but he chose to gather a bride for his Son from among sinners. He came into this world to save us from ourselves, to prepare a new world for his bride. This is the greatest love the world has ever seen. But it is no surprise if you know who God is, because his Word tells us and his actions prove to us that God is love. And it is because of this love that he prepares a new world for those he saves.

When you think of these preparations, think of a couple expecting a baby, preparing that baby room. How tenderly, how eagerly, how thoughtfully the crib and the clothes and the paint and everything are arranged and the days are ticked off the calendar. Or compare it to a couple decorating their first home as they anticipate living together as husband and wife. What excitement, what love goes into those preparations? And we were created in

the image of God to reflect God and that means the greatest earthly joys in love and preparations are simply a pale shadow, a pale reflection of who God himself is.

God's love and joy in preparing a home for every person in the bride of his Son is as much greater than ours as God is greater than we are.

What is this new world like? It will be a world of perfect love. No more sin. No more broken relationships with God or with others. And this is the only way in which verses four and five can become possible. Otherwise it would be an impossible dream, one of those silly man made myths that people try to perfume death with. But it doesn't work.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”³

Do you realize how touching this is, that God himself wipes away the tears of his Son's bride? There is something so tender, so Father like about that, isn't there? Whose tears—think about this—whose tears have you ever wiped away in your life? Your spouse, your own children or grandchildren. Probably no one else.

If you have a little child and he comes to you crying, what do you do? You pick him up and you wipe away his tears and you are not satisfied until those tears are replaced with a smile. And if we, as limited sinners can love our children like this, how much more does the limitless, perfect God love his children tenderly and dearly?

And here we read that God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of those who are his. You cannot imagine a more loving, tender or intimate scene. And he is also the one who can do this. There are tears that you can wipe away for each other, but too often the heartache that is the cause for those tears lingers and remains. We cannot heal each other's hurts or hearts. We can share them, but we cannot cure them. God alone can do so. And these verses are not just a description of what will happen when Jesus Christ returns again to remake this world and judge the living and the dead and make all things new. It is also true now when a believer dies.

We may, by the grace of God, say this to his glory about Stiena. But she is the in the presence of the God whom she learned to love. The pain that swelled up and shut down her body these last weeks is gone. Her loving spiritual bridegroom who cares more about her than the most kind man could ever care for his wife on earth has welcomed her home.

Why do people who love God and others die and die so young comparatively speaking? Because the bridegroom calls them home, because that is what she was created for, to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That is the best part about heaven.

All good things in this world come to an end, but in heaven, life is only without end. Good things, one after another—verse seven calls it eternal life—it even speaks in verse

³ Revelation 21:4.

seven of inheriting all things, of the entire world made new. It is hard to even imagine, isn't it? That is why God has to reassure us in verse five.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”⁴

Only the one who sits on the throne of the universe can do it, but he will and his words are true and faithful. All his promises come true. This is so sure that God can speak in verse six as though it is already happened. He doesn't say it will happen. He says it is done. It is finished and it is that kind of rock solid hope that makes even death good news when the person who dies is a child of God.

It is hard to imagine or is it? God allows glimpses of heaven to filter through into this world. That is why there are so many good things to enjoy this world. But more so yet, God through his Holy Spirit gives his people blessed foretastes of heaven now.

I am sure, children, you have been to Costco, right? That is one of your favorite stores to go with your mom to. Why? Because you can take a bite of pizza or sausage or cheese. You are getting a foretaste of what it would be like if you would buy a whole pizza and take it home. And God gives his children foretastes now already in this world of the joys of heaven.

Sometimes even during those moments when the tears are running down your face, he gives joy and exuberance which are the atmosphere of heaven even in the darkest hours, even in the moments of death. And if the foretastes are so great sometimes, what will the full possession and the full enjoyment be?

That brings us to our last point. We have been considering the unavoidable reality, a world of pain, sorrow, suffering and death and tears because of our sin. We have considered the amazing promises of God backed up by Jesus Christ. We need to end by focusing on the God who makes these promises. And, in a way, we have been doing that all along and we have been considering the life of Stiena only in light of what it can tell us about God. God is the good news of this passage. God is the one who is worth celebrating in a funeral service. When you consider who he is, he is worthy of being the bridegroom, of wearing the crown, of sitting on the throne. He is worthy of your worship. He is worthy of your love. He is worthy of your obedience. He is worthy of your trust, of your hope, of your life, of everything you have and are. He not only has a right to it, he deserves it. And it is this consideration of God that you are now called to join.

Some of you already share this same biblical faith, this same focus on God, perhaps learned at your mother's knee. What a privilege the greatest legacy she could have left you. Do you share that same focus, hope, love, trust and desire? Or are you still living the lifestyle of verse eight? Your thoughts are in your actions or of other sins mentioned in the Word of God. Are you learning to live life by God's standard? You cannot hear of a world like this that God will bring about and then say, “I don't want to live in that new world.” You can't say that, can you?

⁴ Revelation 21:5.

And I would like to appeal especially now to those of you who do not share this faith personally, who do not know this God. Do you not want this world? Do you not want him to be your God? When it is described to you who he is and what he does, does it not make you thirsty for another world?

Verse six gives another promise of God for the here and now.

God says:

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”⁵

You are thirsty for this world. It is what you were created for. You may not be willing to admit and to recognize it, but it is true of you. You were not created for death, but for this life, the life of this text. Do you not desire to enter it and receive it? Jesus Christ is an able and willing Savior. He promises that all those who thirst for living water and ask it of him, will receive this water of spiritual, eternal life. You do not earn this privilege by being a good person. For none are good enough to earn it, except Jesus Christ. You do not lose this call and this promise by a life of sin, because it is for sinners that Jesus Christ came.

Is this why God brought you to this service today, so that you would hear the truth about yourself and about him and hear his command and his promise that all those who turn to him through his Son will receive eternal life through him?

That is my great hope and prayer as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ that everyone hearing would desire, pursue and seek this life. And if you want to say, “Well, I am not good enough. I have sinned too much.” No, that is not true. Nothing that the grace of God shown in the cross of Jesus Christ cannot save you from. God forgives sinners, the worst of sinners.

And maybe you want to say, “I am not bad enough. I am offended of your description of me as a verse eight sinner.” Well, friend, your being offended is not going to change God’s standards or change the facts.

Imagine you go to the doctor and you learn you have cancer and instead of prescribing treatment, the doctor says, “I am going to take the medical book and I am going to rewrite it. And now your aches and pains and tumors and need is going to be put under the section of normal habit, healthy life. Here you go. Go and enjoy your life.”

Would you appreciate a medical doctor doing that? And yet isn’t that what you are doing if you refuse to face what God says about your sin and about the paycheck of death that your life is heading to?

And maybe you say, “Well, I don’t want to. I don’t want to live life God’s way.”

⁵ Revelation 21:6.

That is true of all of us as we are born. That is what the Bible means by us being dead in sin, that we don't want to do what pleases God. But God can give you a desire transplant so that you want to want what he wants. Didn't we hear it from Lord's Day one? And by this Holy Spirit he makes me sincerely willing and ready from now on to live for him. That is the beauty of the gospel, that God takes people who do not want him, who rebel against him, who defy him, who walk away from him, who refuse to listen to his words and believe them even when they are pressed on your conscience time after time that God takes people like that and gives them desire transplant and makes you new.

If you don't want this life, then you need to go God and say, "Lord, make me want it."

Maybe someone says, "Well, don't pressure me."

I won't apologize for doing so, but I will explain why. This isn't manipulation. This isn't a salesman trying to convince you to take something you don't really need. This is the pressure of love.

And you may want to say, "Don't you go and tell me you love me. You don't even know me and you may never see me again."

I was thinking, actually, of something else. Love for Jesus Christ, first of all. He is worthy that the whole world would see him for who he is and turn to him and repent of sin and trust in him and love him. He is worthy. And that is why I press you.

But we also see in his call of the gospel to you personally today the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ expressed. That is why he sends his messengers into every corner of the world, into every opportunity and occasion to preach the good news of the Savior so that you may be called to be saved from yourself through him.

God gives preachers as if the preachers were the spark of his own goodness so that the exuberance you see in the gospel is but a pale reflection of God himself as the news is proclaimed to you the dying that there is life in his Son.

And to be very personal for a moment, I would not want anyone to miss the treasure of glorifying God forever and enjoying him. This is so wonderful that everyone here who believes it wishes it for you, too, not only because we wouldn't want you to miss heaven and the God of heaven, but because verse eight reminds us, very clearly and unmistakably that those who do not enter heaven cannot escape hell.

That is what verse eight means by referring to the lake burning with fire, the second death. Hell is a world in which there is only tears, only pain, only sorrow, only regret. The tears never stop there. Every good thing is taken away. Hell is an unforgivable reminder that wrong is wrong, so wrong that it deserves this. I deserve hell. You deserve hell. Everyone on earth deserves hell. That is what makes salvation so amazing.

But it does not have to be like this. You do not have to go to hell and pay forever the wages of sin, death. For though the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23, the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The wonderful Savior who prepares the new world, the new city where those who love the Lord will be together with each other and the Lord, who prepares this new life of glorifying God and enjoying him forever, calls you this day from this very text in his Word to turn from your sin and surrender unconditionally to him. He proclaims himself as the passport to this new world. He says that you have been made thirsty for the water of life. The fountain is open during this service and the King hands out its water freely. To all who obey his call, he promises to wipe your tears away already now, often, to comfort you, to guide you and lead you by his hand, to give you blessed foretastes and glimpses of heaven and then to wipe away your last tear at your death.

You will die one day, too. Isn't that why he found death is disturbing and uncomfortable to us? And when you die you will receive one of two things. You will receive either the wages of sin, which is death, or the gift of God's grace which is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord. Receive him. Believe in him. Follow him. This is the only way to die triumphantly.

Unbelievers have died courageously sometimes on the battlefield or in the hospital. Unbelievers have died sometimes with a measure of outward peace. No unbeliever has ever died triumphantly and victoriously and joyfully. And yet 1 Corinthians 15:54 says this.

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”⁶

Such death is not loss, but gain. Such death is not defeat, but victory. Such death is not the end. It is the beginning. What a God who makes this possible for sinners.

If this was your funeral service today—and some day it will be—what kind of testimony have you left behind? How are you living your life? Ask yourself that question. Don't stop asking yourself that question until you can, by the grace of God answer, “My life is to be led by the hand of God and to serve him.” And then death becomes victory through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us sing together Psalter 426, stanzas one, five, eight and 10.

[singing]

I would now like to ask George Bader, Sr. to come forward and say some things on behalf of the family.

Change of Voice:

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:54.

Bereaved family, [?] family, it is [?] friends of the widow. If the Lord has spared you this, I hope you also that is grief until this very moment. And, oh, does the Lord deal with you, friends, be your strength from day to day, because it is nothing in ourselves that gives strength to bear our burdens, but he has revealed himself that great burden bearer Jesus Christ. He went ahead to bear the heaviest burden.

Many years ago, it was about 50 years ago that a younger brother, but he was proud to the grave. On such days that come back in your mind he was only 13 months old. And [?] lost your first born which died at child birth [?] to your mother, my wife. We lost also a grandson. [?] proof that men, although, created to live, he is born to die and no one from all that are left there upon earth shall be able to escape it. We are all born perfectly as the crowning jewels of God's creation. It almost mentions here before then, because he came of men. Through disobedience we became sinful creatures. We have forsaken our God and Creator and [?] admit it or not, we have to experience that the wrath of God is resting upon sin. But another wonder that he has opened a way of salvation, because there is a possibility yet for the greatest of the sinners to be saved, to be reconciled with his God and Creator. Now it is a day of grace and we don't know how short or how long a life will be. For some it is very short. For some it is more years.

Not long ago in Grand Rapids [?] 107 years old and still it compares with a never ending eternity [?] that our life is as a vapor. It can fade away in a moment of time. But whatever [?] that that is our life is, yet extended as we are all healthy, that we have a healthy mind, because also a dear wife who was just a bright minded lady. Yet so much her health and support of her that [?] an empty place not only for you, but for all of us in the whole family. We all depend upon our God for help and for strength and he can help [?] when you lost your dear mother. [?] strength according to her cross and [?] as also will be your portion. As from day to day we are [?] that the Lord has not forsaken you. Also the talks go back over the immigrants of the old country. You were only a boy of three years old and [?] and her parents also emigrated three years later. I remember as it was a day of yesterday you met her that [?] after you are only a few days here. She was [?] and the [?] of her mother. And you were a little older. And I was just recently talking at the Calvary Christian School about the immigration and when I began [?] and I said to them that we went [?] beginning of the immigration and it was not.

Months before [?] be prepared for it. We had to go many times to the Canadian [?] and we had to go see a health doctor. And I mention this because immigrating and moving from one country to another country, but all of us, my dear friends, have to move once from this country to that country which is eternal. And there is also a preparation involved.

Is it not so that we just can't step from here into heaven as I often times I explain. No, we need to be prepared. Because I had to go that time with their family to the health doctor and [?] before we already tried to immigrate, but the in-laws together, in the family. But one of the children was rejected because of health reasons, so we couldn't go. And oh what a spiritual sense. My friends, we are all spiritually sick. We are diseased

with sin. And we are [?] God's words, we are full of leprosy from the top of our head to the sole of our feet. And it is necessarily that you are healed from it in order to come to eternal [?] where there shall be no sickness and no death anymore. And [?] possible that we are [?] spiritual disease because there is revealed in God's Word [?] can be saved, Jesus Christ. He has borne that burden for his people so they shall be cleansed from all their sin and from all their iniquity. He has borne that burden.

And also with the immigration we had to be free of debt, because here in Canada you were not allowed to come in with unpaid tax or other debts. You had to go to the tax office and have the receipt. It had to be stamped also with the Canadian counselor before we ever could enter in this country. And also [?] a spiritual sense, my dear ones, we are burdened with sin and iniquity. We have a debt so great not to be called [?] heard of in this world. And it does [?] there shall not come anything that is unclean or sick. But also there shall not come in anything that is loaded with debt, that debt of sin and transgression. And it has to be got out of the way and [?] not possible.

It is also revealed in God's Word [?] Jesus Christ has also suffered and died for such debts people as we are, people with so much a burden of debts, a mountain of debt. And the Lord has crawled through that Garden of Gethsemane and there on the cross he had to call out,

“My God ,my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁷

And he knew it. He was forsaken or the... does not such people as we are could be saved, could be reconciled with his God and Creator. He has opened the way where we have closed it all together and [?] there was a possibility for Stiena. There is a possibility for each and every one of us as long as you are yet in the days of grace. The Lord [?]

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”⁸

But it is first necessary that you are brought to the knowledge of our [?] condition by nature, that we know that we are loaded with sin, iniquity and how [?]. Also we take back at our dear daughter-in-law, had she only known sooner that she was infected with cancer and the treatments could have had so much better results, yes. And so the spiritual sense to [?] we know that we are loaded with that grief of sin and of that debt that is unmountable high. Oh, that we should flee to him.

But the sad thing is that when nature or eyes are closed for ever we don't know and we don't see although we may be told it. Many people every day and every Sunday and you will get... Our eyes have to be opened and our hearts have to be inclined to admit it, that we are such that are loaded with sin, that our [?]

⁷ Mathew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

⁸ Matthew 11:28.