

Introduction

Proverbs 10:7 states that "The memory of the righteous is a blessing." The reference is to the blessing it is to remember the life of the righteous person. It certainly rings true this afternoon. Ardath Klicka is a child of God through faith in Christ and was a strong advocate for the truth and glory of Jesus Christ. The Lord has taken her home, but he has left us the precious riches of her memory. We have gathered this afternoon to remember Ardath. And it is a blessing to remember her.

As for me I think fondly of Ardath's faithful participation in the life of Grace Community Church where she was tightly linked in love to the body. I also hold dear memories of visits I had with Ardath and George in their home. Ardath dealt with some real hurts and heartaches in her life, but she did not stop trusting in her savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. She persisted in confidently resting her hope in the unshakeable word of God. One of Ardath's favorite texts of Scripture was Isaiah 40:8. It says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." I want to turn to the powerful word of God now for strength and encouragement.

John 16:16-22, 33 [Read and pray]

In these verses Jesus is seeking to prepare his disciples for the sorrowful reality of his imminent departure. He says, "A little while and you will see me no longer." It would be a time of sorrow for the disciples. Jesus alerted the disciples solemnly, "Truly, truly I say to you, you will weep and lament. . . . You will be sorrowful." Jesus said the world would rejoice while they were filled with such sorrow. It is clear that Jesus was speaking of his physical return to be with his Father. The Spirit of God would be with them; nevertheless it would be a distressing time for them." Truly this is the way it is whenever God takes out from among us one of our loved ones. It is painful and sorrowful. We cannot help but hurt and grieve no matter how much hope we have. It was to be this way with the disciples of Jesus when he departed and it will be this way for us when God takes loved ones home.

And yet, Jesus is telling these things to his disciples to stabilize them when the billows of sorrow swept over their souls. He points beyond the sorrow to a joy that would far outdo and outlast the sorrow they would know. He uses the figure of a woman giving birth. When a woman is giving birth she has sorrow because her hour has come. The birth process is difficult and painful. But once the baby has been delivered, the sorrow is forgotten. She no longer remembers the anguish. It is forgotten for the joy that her child has been born! I remember the birth of my firstborn. It was a long day. But what stands out for me was the joy of celebrating with our church family our delight that our son was born. The long day gets lost in the joy of the subsequent years of watching him grow and flourish.

Jesus's point is that his departure is going to be like that. It will hurt for a while, but there is an eclipsing joy just over the horizon. Jesus explains in verse 22, "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you." He speaks of his return. From the day Jesus ascended until the day he returns, it is a time of sorrow because he is absent in body, but when he returns to earth, he will gather all his people together and we will see him. The sheep of Jesus will see him, and we will be with him for all eternity. And we will know joy unspeakable and full of glory. And the joy will never end. As Jesus declares, "no one will take your joy from you." This is the blessed hope that sustains Christ's people in days of sorrow.

You and I do not experience the absence of Jesus the same way that the disciples did. We have never had him in our presence bodily. But we do experience the absence of loved ones as they die. We certainly are in the midst of that experience right now as we still sorrow that the Lord has taken Ardath home. But we do not sorrow as the world does without hope.

We know that Jesus is coming again. And we can also know that when he comes he will bring with him the believers who have gone on ahead to be with him in spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 – "For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will

descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

This promise should never get old for the people of God! We yearn for the presence of Christ. We sorrow now in the death of his saints. But we are not without hope. In fact we are promised a glorious homecoming to a place we have never been before. From the day of our conversion to Christ, we turn to God to trust in Christ and have sins forgiven, to love him and serve him, AND to wait longingly for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

So this is the believer's hope. Ardath's faith in Christ was well-known. And though her body died, she nevertheless lives. As Jesus explained to Martha, "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). By his life and death and resurrection, Jesus delivers those who believe in him from God's coming wrath. He has overcome and desires to stabilize us in faith and hope though we sorrow in this time and encounter troubles and heartache.

Jesus concluded his remarks about his departure and return by explaining in John 16:33 why he had told them all this: "I have said these things to you," said Christ, "that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

If you are in Christ, as was Ardath, this peace and this confidence is meant for you too. Jesus overcame the world—the world of tribulation, the world that rejoices when he dies, the world of sorrow and woe, the world languishing under the power of the prince of the air. By his life and death and resurrection he has overcome, and those who turn from sin and trust in Jesus join him as overcomers in him. Ours may be trouble, but our death is the entrance to great and eternal joy in Jesus. And through him we can know peace and hope even now.

Undoubtedly some who are sharing in this memorial service do not share Ardath's hope. You do not know peace and joy and hope because you are not believing in Christ Jesus. You are dead in your trespasses and sins against God. You live according to the course of this world. You live in the passions of your flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and are by nature a person who abides under God's wrath. You need rescue from your sin. You need to believe in Jesus. Otherwise your destiny is an eternity of abiding under God's outpoured wrath. We are able to rejoice today for Ardath because years ago she had repented of her sin and trusted in Christ Jesus. Would that if you have not, you would turn and trust him today.

Prayer

Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.