

Funeral Sermon for Ellen Davey

Blessed is the One Who Trusts in the Lord

Readings - Isaiah 25:6-9, I Corinthians 15:50-58, John 14:1-6

February 7, 2023

Theme - Blessed is the One Who Trusts in You

Text - Psalm 84:10 - 12 - For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Dear Friends in Christ,

There's a song I've been hearing in recent weeks on Christian radio, and every time I hear it, I think of Ellen Davey. The title of the song is "God is in this Story."

The refrain includes these lyrics, "*God is in this story. God is in the details. Even in the broken parts / He holds my heart / He never fails / When I'm at my weakest / I will trust in Jesus / Always in the highs and lows / The one who goes before me / God is in this story.*"

God was in Mary Ellen's story. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the one true God loved her with an everlasting love. At the cross, Jesus Christ suffered and died with a picture of her in His heart. Before she was ever born, God ordained all of the days she would live and every good work that she would be assigned to do. In the waters of Holy Baptism, her Father in heaven claimed her as His own daughter, the sign of the cross was placed upon her forehead and upon her heart, and as the waters of regeneration splashed over her, her name was written in the book of life, her mansion in heaven was put on reserve.

God wasn't just in her story in a generic kind of a way - He was in the details of her story. As often as she listened to God's Word, the Spirit of God worked and strengthened her faith. As often as she ate and drank at her Lord's Supper, her Savior held her close, her sins were forgiven, her soul was refreshed, and she departed with a peace that is distinctively Christian. Through all the ups and downs of life, Jesus was her Good Shepherd, following her around with goodness and mercy. When her heart was broken, Jesus was her Friend, listening carefully as she poured out her heart's desires. When her soul was tired, Jesus was her Refuge and her Rest. When she was worried and distracted, the Spirit of God would invite

her to be still and know that God was God. When she was weak, her Savior was her strength. And when she was a little bit too big for her britches, as my father would say, God would find a way to keep her humble.

As many of you know, Ellen was a detail person. In this sanctuary, the chalice and the paten and the communion trays didn't just go wherever folks wanted to set them down. They went where Ellen and the Altar Guild manual said they should be set down. The paraments and the chancel furniture didn't just get arranged in haphazard fashion, they were arranged in decent and orderly fashion. When Chuck and Ellen placed banners for Thanksgiving and then Advent and Christmas and then Epiphany, Chuck didn't just throw them up where he felt like it. He placed them precisely where his dear wife directed him to place them!

Our focus today isn't so much on the good works that Ellen did - but rather on the grace of God that enabled and motivated her to do them. As I think about Ellen directing our Altar Guild and making sure that this sanctuary was cared for in loving and devoted fashion, the words of Psalm 84 come to mind. **For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**

Our sermon theme today is "Blessed is the One Who Trusts in the Lord." Two truths we would learn about this blessedness.

Truth #1 is that blessed is the one in whose heart the Holy Spirit has worked a yearning to be in the house of the Lord.

In Psalm 84, the Psalmist declares that one day in the courts of God is better than a thousand elsewhere. He would rather be a lowly doorkeeper in the sanctuary than lead a lavish life that ended in eternal damnation. Three times in Psalm 84, the Psalmist uses the word blessed. Blessed are the people who dwell in the house of the Lord and sing his praises. Blessed are people who find their strength for living in the one true God. Blessed is the person who trusts in God for forgiveness of sins and for refuge and for help in time of need.

The Bible said it back then and says it still today, **"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."** And again, **No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit.**

In Old Testament days, it was possible to have the full joy of worshiping God only in one city (Jerusalem) and only in one building (The Temple). Only in the courts of the Jerusalem temple could sacrifices be made by the pilgrims who had made

their annual journey. Today of course, we are free to worship God anywhere and anytime. As all kinds of folks like to point out, one can worship God the Creator out in the woods while hunting or out in the boat while fishing. True enough, but it is in the sanctuary where Christ the Redeemer meets up with us with the forgiveness of sins. It's in the church service where Christ our Savior meets up with us in the words of absolution, in the preaching of His Word, and in the bread and the wine of the Sacrament. With the Psalmist and with John, we say this morning, How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord.

Truth #2 has to do with the heavenly banquet, and it comes to us from Isaiah 25. It is that blessed is the one who feasts on the best meal there is, the one prepared by Jesus Christ suffering, dying, and rising again.

Isaiah pictures the New Testament church as the mountain of the Lord where the Lord would prepare a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine and rich meat full of marrow. On this mountain, the Messiah would swallow up death forever, and the Lord God would be wiping away the tears from all faces. We think of Jesus Christ suffering all that he was appointed to suffer on Mt. Calvary, Christ crucified until he was dead on Mt. Calvary and then buried into the ground. In that hour, this feast of rich food was prepared, and by the grace of God believers in every generation get to receive the best meal ever here on earth. Namely our Lord's Supper, which is in fact a foretaste of the feast to come.

Dear Chuck and all of you who knew and loved Ellen - as the weeks and months go forward, I invite you to remember that every time you step forward for your Lord's Supper, you are by no means celebrating just with a few dozen other folks here and now. You are feasting with the angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven, you are feasting with Mary Ellen and Altar Guild members of generations past. You are feasting with millions of Christians who are part of the one, invisible, holy, Christian and apostolic Church, the communion of saints. Whereas life doesn't get any better here on earth than at our Lord's Supper, it gets infinitely better the moment we breathe our last, and the angels take our souls into the very presence of Christ.

(Story of my children's lesson where I was trying to teach the children that there was nothing you could **do to get into heaven**, and that you could only get into heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. I concluded the lesson by asking the children the question, "What do you have to do to get into heaven?" I repeated the question again and again, wanting the answer, there's nothing you can do, Jesus has done it

all...finally little Ladonna raised her hand answered, "You have to die to get into heaven."

Ladonna was right, of course. Just as surely as a kernel of wheat has to be buried into the ground and die before there can be new life and eventually a harvest, so also did Jesus Christ have to die before our sins could be forgiven. He had to die before our spiritual debt could be canceled. He had to die before the wrath of a righteous God could be satisfied. He had to die before he could be resurrected and all of the promises of Old Testament prophecy could be fulfilled.

Today we stare death in the face, and it's not pretty. To the average unbeliever outside of the church, it seems as though the Daveys and we are the losers today. And while it is true that Ellen lost her life here and now, for those who are in Christ - to die is gain. Even though this body has for a time returned to dust and ashes, we know by faith that already now Ellen's soul is in the presence of Jesus. And that the day is coming when the trumpet will be sounding and the archangel will be shouting and Jesus will be returning and bodies will be resurrected.

In closing today, we would comfort you, Chuck, and one another, with the news that in the presence of Jesus there is no more trouble, no more illness, no more creaks and groans caused by old age, no more tears, no more sadness, no more death. We look forward to that day when final victory will be realized, and until that day, we pray that all of us here assembled would be steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. We pray that we would never lose sight of the fact that in the Lord our labors are never in vain. And we pray that Mary Ellen Davey would rest in peace until that great day of resurrection. In Jesus' Name. Amen.