

“Life in Christ” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Revelation 7:9-17
Judy Blubaum Memorial – November 11, 2023

- I. **To all the family and friends gathered here to today:** Grace, peace, and mercy are yours through our living Savior, Jesus Christ.
- II. **We all knew this day was coming,** but nothing prepares us for it.
 - a. Judy was in a steady decline for quite a while.
 - i. Bruce would give me updates from her caregivers and the hospice people, and it was always one less thing she could do.
 - ii. Alzheimer’s is said to be a disease of a thousand deaths because each day we lose a little more of the person we love.
 - iii. Year after year, little pieces get lost... from memory and recognition, to the physical issues that follow.
 1. Pretty soon it was no more walking... no more sitting up... no more eating... no more swallowing – and then she was home with Jesus.
 - b. As much as life changed around Judy and her illness, the great blessing to us all is none of that defined her.
 - i. It’s easy to get caught up in the trials and struggles right in front of us and lose sight of the whole life of a person – and their eternal life.
 - ii. Above all, we know that Judy had a life in Christ.
 - c. Although it’s been quite a while since Judy has been active in church, she spent most of her life in worship and serving Jesus.
 - i. It’s hard to say how she got to church in the first place, because I’m not sure her parents were church goers.
 - ii. However, when she met Bruce in that fateful English class in their freshman year of high school, life in Christ and going to church became a part of their lives early on.
 - iii. They were married in this very sanctuary by the first pastor of Ascension, Pastor Brewer.
 - iv. In fact, Ascension was home base for their whole family as they grew and expanded.
 - d. Judy was a quiet, behind the scenes kind of person.
 - i. I don’t think I ever had a long conversation with her in all the years I’d known her.
 - ii. In talking to Bruce, he described her as “gracious and loving,” to which I wholeheartedly agree.
 1. She loved her family so much... and she took great satisfaction in being a servant to prepare things so that others could enjoy them... it was less about her and more about the other person.
 - e. Judy loved mission and witnessing Jesus to the nations.
 - i. She went on one of our many mission trips to Guatemala to run Vacation Bible Schools with the children there.

- ii. She served on the Mission Board and supported it for as long as she could – because she knew the value of faith in Jesus, and how much that can change a life.
- iii. I didn't get to go on a mission trip with Judy, but I can just imagine her seeing all those little kids hearing the message about Jesus and just lighting up with a big smile.
- f. Yes, we might have written a different ending for Judy, but her life in Christ is what really mattered... because she now has the crown of life.

III. **In our Revelation reading today, John gets to see heaven.**

- a. On occasion, people in the Bible are given a picture of what heaven will be like, and John was one of them.
- b. If you remember, John was very close to Jesus, and would be considered part of His inner circle...
 - i. John was even there to see Jesus crucified, and Jesus asked him to take care of His mother Mary after His death.
- c. Now John has spent his life as a missionary witnessing about the blessings of his Lord and Savior – and was exiled to the island of Patmos as punishment for being a Christian.
- d. God gave John a revelation of the end of time and heaven... and I suppose he does the best he can to write down what he saw – as indescribable as that probably was!
- e. It's almost as if John is sitting up on a high place, overlooking this incredible scene...
 - i. There before him is a massive crowd.
 - 1. Some of you have been to events with big crowds – but this is beyond anything we imagine – stretching out as far as we could see as the people are praising God and singing.
 - 2. These are the people who God the Father claimed through His Son Jesus, and they are thanking Him with all their being.
 - 3. As Judy now knows firsthand, the people are from every nation and language... and they are no longer separated by race or culture or language – because God has brought them together around one thing... Himself.
 - ii. The crowd is waving palm branches – just like on Palm Sunday when the crowds were welcoming their Savior, King Jesus – it's a sign of celebration and joy and praise.
 - iii. Each of them is wearing a white robe – a symbol of purity and being right with God.
- f. Many years ago, Judy was baptized into Christ – and it was there that a spiritual covering was placed on her – a white robe of righteousness.
 - i. This is where God claimed her and gave her the gift of faith and a trust in Him...

- ii. This claim on Judy would go with her for her entire life – even when she couldn't remember it – we know that faith is bigger than an “intellectual ascent” to God.
 - 1. Our faith is a trust in Him that stays with us when we are unaware – when we are sleeping, if we end up incapacitated, or even if we have dementia.
 - 2. God's gift of faith is not found in our own hard work or good deeds, nor is it taken away by disease or tribulation.
 - 3. The white robe that Judy wears is bleached in the blood of Jesus... meaning that His work on the cross to die for her sins is the only work that counts.

IV. **The greatest gift Judy leaves us is her unwavering faith in Jesus.**

- a. Her faith gives us a great deal of peace because we know what that means – as John tells us in the Gospel lesson – only Jesus is the way to be welcomed to the home He has prepared.
- b. Her life in Christ here ultimately leads to a life in Christ for eternity... when all the earthly tribulations are gone in the blink of an eye.
 - i. How many tears were shed in Judy's lifetime?
 - ii. How much pain did she endure?
 - iii. How much fear, anxiety, and tribulation did she experience?
- c. John tells us that the great crowd in heaven has been brought out of the tribulation, and the pain and suffering are over.
 - i. Judy is whole... Judy's life in Christ now means she is perfect – she has nothing but joy and peace now and forevermore.
- d. I want to leave you with that beautiful picture of heaven today.
 - i. Nothing Judy did got her there – but it was God's work through Jesus that claimed her... so she knows being in heaven is a pure gift.
 - ii. Envision Judy on the very happiest day of her entire life – the internal joy welling up to a huge smile and twinkle in her eyes.... Maybe it's the birth of a child... maybe it's Bruce singing a song to her as she swoons... maybe it's some other wonderful blessing life gives us...
 - iii. Imagine her without a care in the world as everything is “just perfect.”
 - iv. Think about her being completely fulfilled and content all that same time.
 - v. Now you have a hint of what God has in store for those who believe in Him.
- e. May the Lord bless us all as we await the life in Christ Judy is now living. Amen.