

“Privilege” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Carol Hofer Memorial Service January 25, 2025

- I. **To all of the family and friends** here today: Grace, peace, and mercy are yours through our living Savior, Jesus Christ.
- II. **“Don’t let your hearts be troubled.”** (v 1)
 - a. Jesus begins our Gospel reading today with words that seem impossible when we consider the loss of such a cherished person in our lives.
 - b. I certainly tried not to be troubled as Carol continued down the path of procedures, surgeries, and treatments that slowly lost their power to save her life.
 - i. Yet, I suppose at some point in anyone’s illness, there is a certain resignation that the medical fight is done – and a simple trust in the Lord... or as Jesus says, “Believe in God... believe also in Me.” (v 1)
 - ii. Carol finally got to the point of completing her earthly journey with her husband by her side, and her Lord and Savior who gave her life.
 - c. All the preparation in the world doesn’t allow for us to really understand the loss – and the void that Carol leaves behind in the lives of her family, her friends, church members, and all those who will miss her presence.
 - d. And let me tell you, Carol was very small in stature, but her presence could fill a room with love and warmth...
 - i. So many of you know what I’m talking about, as she would enter the room (even as she became weaker and weaker) her warmth connected her to all kinds of people.
 - ii. Yet, she wasn’t all warm and fuzzy...
 - e. I was blessed to spend a little time with the family and when I asked them to describe Carol, a common thread appeared... she was loving and feisty.
 - i. Each person gave perspective from their own experience... that Carol had grit... she was tough... and she was tenacious.
 - ii. As the youngest of seven kids, she worked her own way through school... and after marrying Herb, she went with him to India... leaving everything behind while learning a new language... and having three girls along the journey!
 - f. I spoke to a family friend from India who remembers Carol in those days in India as she would spend time in the mission hospital caring for hurting people.
 - i. He said that she had great compassion on those who needed help.
 - ii. Not only that, she didn’t want to have any special privileges, but just to be a part of the people who lived in that area.
 - iii. As Herb and Carol left India to come back to the U.S., her caring for people in need didn’t end – as she was often behind the scenes lifting up people around her.

- iv. She was not one to have the spotlight on her – she was happy supporting people in the background.
- g. Even in my own ministry – along with Michele my wife (who Carol connected to because she knew what it was like to be both the pastor’s wife and the secretary of a church) – Carol was a great encourager and listener.
 - i. I for one will miss her smile, and the twinkle in her eye whenever I saw her.
- h. In so many ways, Carol was a light for Jesus in a world with so much suffering and tribulation.

III. **Jesus addresses the loss we experience in our Gospel.**

- a. He had just let His followers know that He could not stay with them indefinitely – that He must go to be with the Father.
- b. Just think about all the hours of conversation, guidance, love, and compassion that Jesus had shown these people... and they were troubled by the thought of their Rabbi... their Teacher leaving them.
 - i. Without Jesus to run to and ask questions, what will we do?
 - ii. If Jesus goes to the Father, what does that mean for our lives?
 - iii. How can we possibly move forward without Him?
 - iv. Maybe some of you feel the very same way about Carol right now.
- c. Jesus stops all these anxious thoughts and says to trust in God... trust in Him... and that He would have a place prepared for them when the time came.... the place prepared for all believers in Jesus... in the presence of God forever.
 - i. No matter what happened to the disciples, they were assured a place in God’s presence when they ended their earthly journey... and that’s what Jesus gives to everyone who believes in Him.
 - ii. All sin, and death... and even satan himself would be defeated as Jesus was nailed to the cross... as He won the battle over all the brokenness that would try to separate us from God...
 - iii. And the most amazing part is that Jesus did not simply die... but rose again... and His victory is passed on to all of us by grace through faith Him... Jesus wins... and so do we... Jesus wins and so did Carol.

IV. **You see, Carol was a baptized child of God.**

- a. All the way back on June 15, 1941, just two weeks after she was born, I imagine her father, Pastor Cloeter, baptized her in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- b. From that moment on, her life was marked by God’s presence as He called her His own.
 - i. Why do you think Carol spent her entire life serving God?
 - 1. So she could get to heaven?

2. No! She served Him because He loved her first... and all those wonderful characteristics that came out of your wife, your mom, your grandmother, your sister, and friend were a reflection of Jesus Christ who saved her.
- c. I know that Carol suffered greatly in her last weeks, but the promise of Jesus Christ in our Gospel lesson today – along with what we read in her favorite verse, “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isa. 40:31) – these promises gave her ability to go through the struggle... and now, she is free from all of that.
- d. I’m so happy that we get to read about the vision of heaven that John had in our Revelation reading.
 - i. As John gets a glimpse of heaven, he describes the desires of Carol’s heart – that all nations... beyond number would be gathered around our God.
 - ii. This great crowd of people will be wearing white robes and singing and praising God with unbelievable joy and wonder.
 1. Talk about a choir that Carol can join!
 - iii. In fact, as much as we would want her here with us, she is finally home... in the very place that Jesus prepared for her.
 1. No more tears... no more cancer... no more loss... just joy... and wonder... soaking up the love of God in the very presence of her Savior.
- e. It was a great privilege to know Carol and be a part of her faith journey.
 - i. I was touched by something Herb said when Carol was so miserable, and she lamented that he had to do so much for her... He simply said, “It’s a privilege.”
 - ii. Yes, it was a privilege to support Carol... to know her... and to have walked with her in faith... what an amazing woman.
 - iii. But by far the greatest privilege of all comes from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... as He chose Carol to be His own... as He loved her first... and He has brought her home in victory...
 - iv. Jesus... who wants to do the very same for you... “Believe in God, believe in [Jesus]...” and the victory is yours. Amen.