

Seeing the Glory of God 11-1-15

Lord Jesus, You know our fears & our grief. We are grateful for the saints who have gone b/4 us to live w/You. Thank You for coming to earth, destroying the power of death, & preparing the way for us to one day be w/You. Amen.

My sister was on a cruise in the Caribbean – it was free! Her husband had won it! A storm came up, the waves were huge, the ship suddenly didn't look sturdy. She thought she was going to die. If it hadn't been for the skill of the Captain, she is certain they would have never made it! Have you ever discovered a lump or ridden w/a crazy driver or been in a horrific storm – any situation where you thought you might die? It's a defining moment. You catch a glimpse of what is truly important. Even though we can feel pretty invincible, at those moments we face our mortality – we are all terminal! There is only one way out of this life – we die- or at least our bodies do.

It's not unreasonable that people would fear death. It is the unknown. We are not in control. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus' death not only defeated Satan, but it also “delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” In other words, the fear of death can harass us to the point of immobilizing us – we can be hindered from fulfilling our calling because of fear! We become enslaved to fear! Fear is a robber.

When my father died, I was afraid to be there. I looked like I was being the good sister when I called my sister & asked if she'd like to get up to see him. I had seen

him; she lived in Cleveland & had not seen him. I offered to take care of her kids. Wasn't that nice? No, it wasn't. Because of the time it took for her to get to Upper Michigan, she missed it. My family & I could easily have made it from Mpls. People who were w/my dad when he died were blessed. My dad's only sister said, "Oh, it was beautiful! I wouldn't have missed it!" Her husband, Uncle Harry, said the exact same thing! Now Uncle Harry was never one to talk like that. I knew fear had robbed me of a huge blessing! When I finally confessed my fear to my mom, she said, "Oh, we were all afraid at that time."

Ps. 116 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Now why would that be precious? Isn't it because saints die in faith, & faith pleases God? A nursing student said that one of her instructors said that once you have witnessed death close up, you will be a different person. A couple weeks ago I was asked by a friend to go to hospice house to visit a parishioner. I didn't know the woman – I just knew she was a believer. Her sons wanted some sort of "last rites." The woman hadn't eaten for days. All she did was open her eyes occasionally. As I began to pray, tears wanted to come out of my eyes. I wasn't really sad – there was just such a holy presence – like this woman had one foot in heaven & she'd just open her eyes to see where she was. Her sons gave her permission to go to Jesus. She died soon after. The same thing was said of Gloria Shafer of Custer. As she lay there halfway to heaven,

she'd say things like "Oh, the children are playing." "There are pets here!" Finally her daughter said, "Mom, just run into the arms of Jesus." And she was gone!

On this All Saints Day, we gratefully remember those who have died in the Lord. Even though there's great sadness because of the loss, there's great joy knowing they now are in the presence of Jesus – they see the glory of the Lord! It's hard for us to imagine. The scriptures for today are loaded w/promises of heaven – no more crying, for "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, & death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." All things new! No more pain! The reading from John assures us of Jesus' authority over death! Lazarus had been dead for four days! Yet Jesus called him out of the tomb! We have nothing to fear! Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's! Other scriptures speak more of the beauty of heaven – we have this to look forward to someday! Yet, it's hard for our finite minds to comprehend.

When you experience the presence of the Lord, you know you can only take so much of it. It is marvelous, but it's like we can only take so much & we back up. Imagine heaven! The presence of the Lord! The absolute purity! No more striving against sin! Peace! Glorious Peace! In our new bodies – alive in Jesus!

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

Do you believe this?” **27** She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

When I was a kid, whenever the pastor talked about heaven, he would cry. He was overwhelmed! He used to say, “Look at the sunsets. If heaven is that beautiful on the outside, how beautiful it must be on the inside!” All of you most likely have had moments when the beauty of God’s creation has taken your breath away! The Black Hills, the big sky, Spearfish Canyon to name a few right here. One time we were at the Conservatory in St. Paul. We came around the corner & there was a wall of hydrangeas. The iridescence of those flowers seemed to take one out of this world – like you were just going to go to heaven! Apparently, the beauty of heaven surpasses all earthly beauty – the streets of gold, the glassy sea, the gates of pearl. We can only imagine.

Hopefully by the time you get there, all sense of “I’m not good enough” “I haven’t done enough” will be filled w/assurance of “Jesus paid it all.” Because you aren’t good enough, you haven’t done enough = there’s no way you could be good enough or do enough! If you could, we wouldn’t need a Savior! That would be the reason we are sooo grateful to Jesus! So grateful in God’s perfect plan, Jesus went to the cross! Paid the price of our sin! We get to enter heaven because of Jesus = no other reason!

So, if we get to go to heaven, how then shall we live? Do we just wait it out, hoping to stay safe in the meantime? That sounds boring, doesn't it? At Vicky Stockman's funeral, she was quoted as having said, "You've heard the saying "He was so heavenly minded, he was no earthly good." But she asked, "Should not that be, "Unless you are heavenly minded, you are of no earthly good?" You get the point – someone who is heavenly minded in the sense that he has no responsibilities to his neighbor here on earth, is of no earthly good. But if we are heavenly minded in the sense that it doesn't matter what happens here on earth, we have a home in heaven. We need not worry. Then, by the grace of God we can be of some earthly good. We can live w/gusto! Love like crazy as we die daily to our flesh! Receiving all that Jesus has for us!

Think about those moments when you think you might die & you get a glimpse of what is truly important. What will you regret when you do get to heaven? Why was I so afraid? Why was I so selfish? Why did I doubt God's promises? Why did I yield to temptation instead of looking for the way of escape? Instead, let us lay aside every sin & run w/perseverance the race that is set b/4 us – looking to Jesus. God is w/you! He loves you just the way you are! As you look to Him, He'll lead you; He'll discipline you = at first all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. One day we will see His Glory in heaven – inexpressible joy! Our questions answered – incredible peace. We will live w/Him forever & ever & ever & ever & ever.....Amen.