

Funeral Sermon for Myrtle Stolte April 15, 2009

Text: 1 Corinthians 7:13-16

¹³And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Theme: The Best Day of Myrtle's Life

A person that is 101 years old has seen many things and changes over the last century. The year that Myrtle was born a Hershey bar cost 5 cents; a loaf of bread cost 5 cents, a gallon of milk cost 31 cents, a stamp cost 2 cents; a car cost \$500; a house cost \$4,500. This might all sound very cheap until you realize that the average household income was only \$897 a year.

Theodore Roosevelt was the president of the United States when Myrtle was born. That year a fall of the stock market sparked a financial panic across the country in October. J.P. Morgan and other financiers created a \$25 million pool and invested in shares on the New York Stock Exchange to avert a major financial crisis. One of the great inventions of that year was the electric vacuum cleaner. The Chicago Cubs won the World Series. In 1907 the average life expectancy in the United States was 45.6 years for men and 49.9 years for women. The leading causes of death were pneumonia and influenza. Myrtle was born just four years after the Wright Brothers invented the airplane in 1903 and one year before Henry Ford debuted the Model T in 1908.

Myrtle lived through two World Wars. When she grew up her father shod horses. Cars and electricity were luxuries that only the rich could afford. Eventually she and Al were able to purchase cars and turning on the light switch became something that you took for granted. She watched a man walk on the moon, and she and Al were able to fly comfortably several times in airplanes when they visited their family out west.

When you get to be 101 you, see a lot of changes in your family. Myrtle outlived many of her brothers and sisters. She and Al raised three children. Then she had the blessings of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even a great-great-grandson. The entire family was able to come for her 100th birthday party almost 2 years ago.

She had plenty of friends. Every time that I visited one of our shut-in members, their first question was, "How's Myrtle?" She touched those who served her from our congregation including our Parish Nurse Cheri and Pastor Schafer. One of our members who worked at Lutheran Manor also served her with a lot of love these past few months.

Myrtle saw a lot of changes. She was so blessed with family and friends, but what do you think was the best day of her life in those 101 years? Would it have been her wedding day, the birth of her first

child, the day that the family moved to their beloved home on 80th Street? I know the answer to that question because I asked her a few weeks ago. (To be honest, I knew before I asked her, but I wanted to be sure.) It was the day that Al became a Christian. When they were married, Al was not a Christian and he had been somewhat hostile to Myrtle's faith. But she prayed for Al, and I believe that the day that Don was baptized, was the day that Al became a member of the church. That was the best day of Myrtle's long life.

In Myrtle's room there is an old worn-out copy of the Lutheran Book of Prayer, which Don got for his confirmation. This is the inscription, **"This prayer book is Don's. The Lord gave him to us—so Dad got to be a Christian. Thanks be to God. Mom"**

I. God blessed Myrtle with many things in this life, but her faith in Christ was the greatest.

She loved her family, and she loved the Brewers. (I'm not sure which she loved more.) But her greatest treasure was her Savior Jesus Christ. There were many things that endeared Myrtle to us, but she was a sinner just like the rest of us. She was not perfect, and Jesus came to save her from her sins. We just commemorated Good Friday. On that day we remember how the Lord suffered for our sins. He bore every single one of them in our place. He suffered the complete judgement of God. He became took our sin, so that we could be covered with His righteousness. Then we moved to Easter morning. The grave couldn't hold our Savior. He rose from the dead, so that we could have new life in Him. When we are baptized into Christ, our sin is washed away, and we are raised to a new life in Christ. It is a life in which we are sure of the forgiveness of all of our sins, we want to do what is right, we know that in times of trouble that the Lord is with us and defending us from all evil, and we know that when our last hour comes our Lord will safely bring us to our heavenly kingdom. When we think of all the blessings that we have, the greatest are those which we have through our Savior Jesus Christ.

This past weekend, as I thought about the Easter peace and joy that Christ gives to us, I couldn't help but think of Myrtle, and I mentioned her at the end of my Easter morning sermon with these words, About a week ago, we lost the oldest member of our congregation. She was 101 years old. You might wonder how people could have cried after such a long and blessed life, but they did. It was also difficult to watch her grow weaker and weaker in the final weeks of her life and then to see her lifeless body. But in those last weeks, she had hope, a sure hope in Christ that she would soon see her Savior, and not only Him but those brothers and sisters in Christ who had gone before her. That is the greatest gift that Christ's resurrection brings. Whenever the Lord calls us from this life, we know that because Christ lives, we will live also. Look to those wounds of Christ that redeemed you from your sin, and they will heal the wound of death. Christ's wounds give peace when we mourn and hope when our last hour will come. Thanks be to God for that victory that He gives to us in Christ Jesus our Lord!

God blessed her with faith that Jesus Christ was her Savior. It was through that faith that He has now called her to the glory of heaven.

II. She longed for her family to share in that faith.

As much as she loved Al, it troubled her in those first years of their marriage that Al didn't share her faith in Christ. Even years after he became a Christian, you could still tell that it was a great burden

to Myrtle at one time. That's why her joy was so great when he became a Christian. Just a few days ago, she still beamed with pride as she thought about his becoming a member of the church. She told me that she was so proud of him. She had the same concern for her children and grandchildren. No matter what you did or where you went, her biggest concern was that you knew your Savior. It was a great comfort to Myrtle that all three of her children were active members of their churches. It gave her a lot of peace to know that you know the Lord. She was an example of what Paul writes about in these verses. Paul writes, "*Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.*" and "*How do you know wife, whether you will save your husband?*" She prayed for Al, and she raised her children in the faith. By God's grace the most important people in Myrtle's life came to know their Savior Jesus.

III. It is through the faith, that God has given to her, that we find peace and hope.

Myrtle found that peace in 1990. Our Lord called Al from this life. Through faith in Christ Myrtle knew that her husband was with the Lord. In these last few weeks she knew that her own time was coming soon. She looked forward to seeing the Lord. She was able to leave this life in peace. It is her faith that gives us hope today. We know that Jesus saved her and washed her sins away. The Lord called her spirit from the weakness of those last days to His glory in heaven. But her body remained, and shortly we will lay it to rest, but just as Christ rose from the dead, those remains will rise the day that He returns, so that body and soul, she will be with the Lord in His glory forever.

Whenever I think of Myrtle I will think of one of our last visits. Myrtle was staring intently and saying, "I will see you soon." At first I thought that she was talking with the Lord, but then I realized that she was speaking to Al. She was looking forward to seeing him and all who have died in faith in Christ and are now in His glory in heaven. The faith, that God gave to Al, gave Myrtle peace and hope that day. Her faith in the Lord gives us that same peace and hope this day.

Earlier I said that Myrtle's best day was when Al became a Christian. I don't believe that this is true any longer. It is now the day when the Lord called her from this life to be with Him, Al, and all the others who have been faithful to our Lord until death. The day that she received her eternal life in the Lord is now the best day of her life.

May God give us that peace and hope until the day that we are reunited with her and all the other saints who have gone before us to be with the Lord.

Amen.

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