

A Sunday Devotional for People and Families at Home

The First Church of Evans

Week Nine - Sunday, May 17, 2020

Greetings from Jerusalem Corners,

On February 17, 1952, Shirley Pfalzgraf was received into membership here at The First Church of Evans, along with her father, mother and her two brothers, the Vail family, along with her sister in law to be, Edel Solberg. Together, they were a family of people who would make much of the history of our church in the decades that followed. Shirley would sing in our choir for decades, serve in our office as church secretary, and late in life she would serve as the Derby Fair chair, breathing life and elegance and energy into the old fair and successfully passing the torch to a new generation of leaders who have brought the Derby Fair into its second century.

After raising three children who only ever made her beam with pride, she married Ron Pfalzgraf, who simply loved and supported her through the whirlwind of activities that she engaged in all over the community through her seventies and eighties and into her nineties. I only have space here to briefly and entirely understate the case. She loved the Lord through up and down and thick and thin. She loved her husband and her children, the grands and great grands and she loved our church.

And we love her and will worship in the same room with her again. Soon and very soon. Weeks ago, Carl Mende wrote the devotions we will worship by this morning, but it turns out that they are perfect for today.

Call to Worship

Revelation 21:1-4

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...
And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband.
And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with men.
He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning,
nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

An Opening Prayer

Almighty God and Father,

Your Word teaches us that in this life we see things dimly, as through a mirror, but you have also promised us that one day we will see you face to face. Please forgive us those sins which, for the moment, obscure our sight and distort our thoughts and affections, and grant us grace to walk with Jesus, so as to see him and ourselves and each other in the light of your truth and grace, and then to live our lives accordingly; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Devotional

Matthew 25:14-21

Carl Mende, Elder and Properties Chair

*"For the kingdom of heaven will be like a man going on a journey,
who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.
To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.
He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.
So also he who had two talents made two talents more.
But he who had been given one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.
Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.
And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying,
'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'
His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little,
I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'"*

Losing a loved one is never an easy thing. The sense of loss and grief can be overwhelming at times. We miss their smiles, their laughter, even their quiet presence in the room. When my father passed away, I was tasked with giving the eulogy for my father. It was a raw and emotional event and probably one of the most difficult things I have ever done. As I spoke, I referred to the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and quoted from verse 21:

*"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things.
I will put you in charge of many things; enter the joy of your master.'"*

Charles Spurgeon said of this verse: "This [joy] is not the servant's portion, but the Master's portion shared with his faithful servants...not so much that we shall have a joy of our own as that we shall enter the joy of our Lord." We may grieve the loss of a loved one, but we can rejoice for those who are followers of Jesus, they have entered into joy.

In Revelation 21:3,4, we read of when God's Kingdom is fully established:

*"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men,
and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or
pain; the first things have passed away.'"*

There will be no pain and suffering, just the joy of being in the presence of God for all eternity. May God bring that day when there will be no more sorrow and we will be united with our loved ones forever.

Offering

Proverbs 3:9,10

*Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce,
then will your barns be filled with plenty, and your vats overflowing with new wine.*

Thank you for the faithfulness you have shown Christ and his kingdom during this season. Please mail what your heart leads you to give to:
The First Church of Evans, Attn: Cindy Fanara, P.O. Box 364, Derby, NY, 14047.

(What follows is the script for the worship video we will offer this week via a link on our website: TheFirstChurchofEvans.com. If you cannot access the video, you can still join us by reading and praying and singing through our continuing Order of Worship.)

Greeting and Prayer

Hymn "Abide With Me" See Insert

Table Talk *James 1:12* Carl Mende, Elder and Properties Chair

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial,
for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,
which God has promised to those who love him.*

I've always enjoyed the beauty and majesty of old hymns. We are blessed to be able to sing so many of them in our church. Recently, I found myself humming the hymn, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus".

The fourth verse of the hymn goes:

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus! The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle, the next the victor's song;
To him that overcometh a crown of life shall be;
He with the King of glory shall reign eternally."

This verse is echoed in the words of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul as he approached the end of his life wrote to his young disciple Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7,8:

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,
which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day,
and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

No matter what life throws at us, if we persevere, if we hold fast to the truth, to faith in Christ "the Lord, the righteous judge", then there is a crown of righteousness laid up for us just as there was for Paul. We have a glorious future in store for us. We look forward to that day when we will stand before our Savior and receive that crown of life.

So next time you are feeling discouraged or overwhelmed, think of this hymn and remember:

"To him that overcometh a crown of life shall be;
He with the King of glory shall reign eternally."

Prayer *Matthew 7:7* "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you."

Please keep the governing authorities in prayer that they make wise decisions in response to the pandemic. Please keep our medical people and other first line public servants and their families in prayer as they selflessly face this danger to save the lives of sick and vulnerable people. Please remember our elderly loved ones who are at home or in care facilities. Please especially remember the Pfalzgraf, Maybee, Willer, and Norton families as they mourn loved ones, and Eric DePan as he continues to recover from eye surgery.

Hymn "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" See Insert

An Ancient Benediction

Numbers 6:24-26 "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the LORD lift his countenance upon you and give you his peace."

With love from The First Church of Evans, till our eyes meet and our hands touch again.