

**Sermon Series:** “Easter’s Glow in Our Lives” – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN — 5/10/09

**Title:** “An Easter Impact On Our Relationships”

**Text:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Intro.:** *Illus.: Death without hope*

**Theme:** Armed with the truth of Jesus’ resurrection we can release our believing loved ones to Christ knowing that we will see them again in the Final Resurrection and for eternity.

### ***How to live in a sure and certain hope of the resurrection***

- Act as if we have everything to live for when my loved one dies (**vs. 13, 14**)
- 1. Do you believe this?---“*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again. . .*” — then live as if you do!
  - a. **Ills.: No need for obituaries**
  - b. *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” 1 Peter 1:3-6*
- 2. Never allowing fear or panic to control and drive my attitude or action in trial or suffering or loss
  - a. *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” 1 Peter 3: 15*
  - b. **Illus.: Steven Curtis Chapman witness after death of little 5 yr. old daughter last May**
- Comforting the grieving not enabling the grief
- 1. Because we have true comfort for those who mourn the loss of death
  - a. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4*
  - b. *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” Romans 12:15*
- 2. Not allowing each other to remain stuck in grief
  - a. Recognizing that there are stages of grieving: **denial, anger, bargaining, acceptance, recovery**
  - b. Remembering that Jesus is the answer to each of the fundamental questions of life
  - c. ***“Comfort one another with these words” (vs. 18)***

### ***What believers can expect on the day that Jesus’ returns***

- A once-and-for-all return of Jesus on the day of the final resurrection (**vs. 15, 16**)
- 1. No millennial period of waiting and no raptured away loved ones to mourn—Jesus is coming back for you & them
- 2. *“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11*
- A bodily resurrection to perfection (**vs. 13, 16**)
- 1. For all who “**sleep in Christ**”
- 2. Even for those of us “**still remaining**” (**vs. 17**)
  - a. *“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51-52*
- A reunion with loved ones (**vs. 17**)
- 1. Scripture promises us that in heaven we shall know and enjoy eternal existence with our departed loved ones
  - a. **Ills.: Stranded 911 passengers reunite**
  - b. *“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12*
- 2. The most important reunion is that with our Lord Jesus
  - a. The human emotion of loss after a loved one takes our eyes off of Jesus and we begin to grope in despair
  - b. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2*

### **Death without hope**

Philip Yancey describes a unique funeral custom conducted by African Muslims. Close family and friends circle the casket and quietly gaze at the corpse. No singing. No flowers. No tears. A peppermint candy is passed to everyone. At a signal, each one puts the candy in his or her mouth. When the candy is gone, each participant is reminded that life for this person is over. They believe life simply dissolves. *Citation: Philip Yancey, Where Is God When It Hurts?*

### **Stranded Passengers from 9/11 reunite**

There were 200 passengers on Flight 929 from London to Chicago on September 11, 2001. As they neared the North American coast, the pilot informed them that, due to a national emergency, they were going to land in Gander, Newfoundland. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Onboard were families, friends, a couple just married and a few others headed to weddings, another returning from a funeral...and others returning from vacation or business trips." Passenger Tom Tucker commented, "We came from all over, but when we were dropped on this beautiful spot [in Newfoundland], everyone was equal." After they landed, they spent 20 hours on the runway, and then, along with thousands of other passengers from some 40 flights, they stayed four days before finally continuing their journeys. Their bond was that in a desperate and dangerous time they were thrown together, depending on one another for support. In June 2002, they had a reunion. "We went through something with these people that no one understands," said Kara Gilbert from San Francisco. "We can talk about it with friends and family, but seeing everyone here makes it real." If the people of Flight 929 felt such a bond after only a few days together, how much greater will be the reunion of God's people when we finally gather in heaven with Jesus.

### **No need for obituaries**

When cable television became available in our rural area, Sally ordered the service almost immediately. Her friend, Gertrude, wasn't as easily convinced, debating whether she could afford the service. "I could stop the daily newspaper," she thought aloud. "I really take it only for the obituaries and it's not worth it. People I know almost never die."

### **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not go before those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words. [NASB]