

The Christian Funeral of Eunice Kramin Saturday, July 16, 2016 at 10:30am
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church - Danube, MN (WELS)
Pastor Mike Kuschel

Revelation 14:13. ¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

In her kitchen hung a calendar and written in many of the daily squares were reminders of all the activities, the groups, the service projects, that she participated in - and many times led. It was small window into the world of this woman who was involved in so many different things and served in so many different ways. Eunice was a valued member of St. Matthew's who served faithfully on the Ladies Evening Circle and the funeral committee. She was active in the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society attending rallies and meetings. She played a vocal role in the 55 and older group known as the OWLS. Whether it was reading a joke to break the ice or reminding our members to save up devotional materials to redistribute to our jail ministry or our WELS ministry to Apache land, she was a well-known fixture at these gatherings. Once upon a time she was also an active leader in the Girl Pioneers, as well. She was active in the church and she was also active in community. Eunice was a leader and a driving force in the local seniors group, a contributing member of the Danube Historical Society, and a member of the Red Hats. Eunice was a longtime widow and yet she took on all the challenges of being a mother and the joys of being a grandmother as best as she could. She was an attentive neighbor, a loyal friend and the list goes on and on. Even after broken bones, and surgeries, and illnesses and ailments slowed her down, somehow she just kept going, with her signature sharp wit and bold personality. But now she rests from all those labors. Sometime just a few days ago, she sat down and fell asleep and this time she fell asleep into the sleep of death and now rests eternally in the arms of her LORD and Savior.

It all seems so sudden. The family had just joined together for the annual town festival. Good times were had, no doubt stories and jokes were shared. I am told that many pictures were taken. I suppose a few card games were played. You, the family, many of you left such a short time ago and now you are back here under very different circumstances. It has to be shocking. It has to be raw and surreal. But it is into this jarring reality that your Savior speaks his words of peace. ***Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in Me (John 14: 1).*** Jesus says these words to you stricken with grief and sadness and utter dismay, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die (John 11:25,26).*** As we sit here still stunned, trying to grasp this sudden loss God's Word gently pierces the pained silence to give us comfort and hope and joy. ***So do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be***

dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10). How fitting for today are these words of God that were Eunice's confirmation verse?

The LORD is our Good Shepherd and in this time of need he does not leave us in want, instead he restores our souls. The Lord Jesus who was a Shepherd to Eunice is your Good Shepherd. The one who guided and upheld and sustained your mother, your grandmother, your friend, He is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus is the one who led Eunice through the deep valleys and the green pastures of this life and has now led her quietly and gently into eternal life. Through this sudden loss our LORD reminds us, that yes, our times are in his hands, but what a joy there is knowing that he is the one who is in control. The eternal God of the heavens, who is our Savior and our Good Shepherd, is also our Heavenly Father who tends to his children with compassion and in His time brings them safely to his warm embrace in heaven. Jesus is your way, he is your truth, he is your life, just as he was for Eunice. And our gives us this wonderful truth that those who fall asleep in him have rest for all eternity. That is the very truth, that triumphant truth, which John records for us today. We don't deserve such an honor, no matter who we are or what we do, and yet God gives us the promise. Those who believe in me, will live. Jesus tells his people. I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28). And with these words before us from Revelation chapter 14 the apostle John tells us how he heard a voice from heaven proclaim this triumphant truth and the Spirit of God also confirmed a blessed message of victory and peace for all those who are by faith in the LORD. John writes in Revelation 14:13. ***"Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."*** Blessed are the dead who die in the LORD. We rejoice that Eunice has been blessed with eternal life and was blessed to be a blessing to those around her.

Any young pastor would be blessed to have a Eunice type in their congregation. She was a blessing to her church and to her pastor. And even though I figured out rather quickly that it was wise to stay on her good side it was usually because she expected so much out of those around her, just as she expected so much from herself. There may have been a few moments of tension, but overall Eunice was a blessing to her church and to her pastor as well as neighboring congregations and pastors and organizations throughout our local community and beyond. Eunice was a take charge kind of lady that served her church and her community in many different ways. She was there and so often she was getting things done. She was there on the phone making sure that funeral matters were cared for, she was there so often making sure your friends and family got seated and fed as we gathered on so many days like this in the church fellowship hall. Folding bulletins, running meetings, serving and leading, she was active, she was busy. But she was not just a Martha in her service but she was also a Mary as she sat at the foot of her Savior listening to God's Word. This servant, this leader in her own right, was also a fixture in worship, and regular

participant in Bible Study, a student of God's Word. She was insistent that the truths of God's Word would be passed down to her family. And who could forget all the Ladies Evening Circle Christmas parties where she made sure that Christmas story was read for all to hear (in the traditional King James, of course.)

But certainly these good things, this list of service included in the obituary or the lists that we can all quickly come up with in our conversations about her: how she was a good host, a strong woman, a dedicated mother, a loyal friend, these things no matter how great, no matter how many, in no way saved her. Eunice was not perfect. We know it. She knew it. And the Bible also makes it abundantly clear that no matter how good, how active, how involved a person is, no one, absolutely no one, can save themselves through good deeds, or even our service to the Church. No we all fall short of God's holiness and righteousness. For every act of faithfulness, for every good deed, for every service to the Church, for every contribution to God's kingdom, there is a pile of sins that far surpasses the good that we do. This was true for Eunice as it is for sinners everywhere.

Our calendars could be completely booked, and stuffed, and scribbled over with service opportunity after service opportunity, ministry after ministry, event after event, and we would never be able to do enough. Imagine for a moment a calendar of good things that we may be able to put together for ourselves tacked up on a board right next to a calendar with all the sins we commit in a month. It doesn't take us long to picture how those two would contrast. Daily we sin. An unkind word here, a nasty thought there, a hurtful gesture, an ill-advised joke, a word of gossip quickly cast out, hatred, anger, greed, envy, discontent, and laziness, and the list of our sins goes on and on. The squares of such a calendar of sin would not just be cramped, but it would become a dark scribbled mess full of ink until overflowing. We all fall short of God's righteous demands. There is no way we could right all our wrongs, balance out, or outweigh all our sins. We could never do enough to undo the evil that we have thought and said and done.

Thankfully there is someone who could do this for us. God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son. God so loved Eunice and you and me and everybody else that he sent his one and only Son to pay for all our sins. To blot out every stain, every mark that could be held against us or written down to condemn us, Jesus shed his own holy and innocent blood. He washed away all that we have done and he has filled up our account with his perfect and holy life. All the days of his life were filled with perfection and that spotless record is now given to us through faith. We who deserve punishment and eternal death because of our daily sin, are instead promised and given the sure hope of eternal life. That is the good news that our Savior gives to us. The good news of forgiveness. The good news of eternal life. And this is the good news that filled and fueled Eunice's life. Knowing the forgiveness and the salvation that her Savior gifted to her is something that led her to do the kinds of things that she did. She thankfully served the church and she was on these

committees and boards as she used the gifts that God had given her out of thankful service to her Lord. God had forgiven her, saved her, and set her free to serve him.

The sins and faults are all covered and wiped away, forgiven and forgotten, thrown into the depths of the sea, removed as far as the east is from the west by Jesus our Savior. This is the good news of the gospel; and then if that wasn't good enough God says that he will remember and commend that which was done in faith by his believers. Not only will he forgive and forget all the horrible things that we have thought and said and done, our God promises to remember and to commend us for all the things that we did in faith. In some fashion, in some divine and heavenly form, God says to his child in heaven, **"Well done good and faithful servant."** As Eunice sat down from her labors and fell asleep in peace we can only begin to imagine how and her soul soared to her Savior's side and because of God grace in Christ she awoke to that very kind of greeting from her God. **"Well done good and faithful servant."** That is the good news that God speaks to us today that brings us comfort that brings us peace, that calms our restless and shocked hearts and minds. **"Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the LORD from now on." "Yes" says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."** This woman who was a blessing to many is now eternally blessed.

The words of our text for today are from a hectic and unsettling scene in the book of Revelation. Yet in the midst of the chaos of the world the LORD commends those who persevere in the faith and remain faithful to Jesus. In these quiet moments as we gather together in this small town church as the big problems of this world continue to churn we come here to celebrate that there was once this faithful Christian woman, who knew the victory and peace that she had in Jesus and so she served her family, she served her little town, she served her community, she served her church, and thus in doing all this she served her Lord. And then one summer day she sat down and fell asleep in peace.

She had problems. She had character. She had her faults. She had her own unique charm. But above all she had her LORD and Savior Jesus. And so as she was going about her usual routine one day just a few days ago the LORD called her home. And there among those heavenly mansions our LORD has brought her soul. There in our Father's house, our God keeps no record of her sins, but in his undeserved kindness he does keep a record of her fruits of faith.

There is so much more that could be said, but now it is time for us to simply say, "Amen!" as we consider one more time the words that are before us this morning. **Blessed are the dead who die in the LORD from now on." "Yes" says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."** Amen.

A recording of the service will be available on YouTube until August 9.
Search St. Matthew's Danube on YouTube or copy and paste the following link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TFPQgiHSAo>