

The Christian Funeral of Ordell Jakel

St. Matthew's Danube

August 19, 2016

Psalm 116: 1 – 9.

¹ I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. ² Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. ³ The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!" ⁵ The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. ⁶ The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. ⁷ Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. ⁸ For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, ⁹ that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

We would sit at the table that was nestled nicely between the kitchen and the living room and we would just talk. As I got situated, Ordell would shuffle toward the table and then he would usually start off with his recounting of latest doctor visit, or the most recent ailment. With a laugh he would then ask me what was new in Danube and after I would respond with this or that update and he would then perpetually find a way to turn the conversation to stories of days gone by. As we talked we would look out the window - out upon the sprawling fields that surrounded his farmhouse - and he would speak of the family that used to farm this site over there or the site over this way. He would speak of the friends from country school that he grew up and grew old with, or he would speak of the people that he would meet along the way on his travels with his livestock or his time in the service. A master of names and details, he would speak and I would try to keep up. A story teller, a conversationalist, a downright jolly man, no matter what the current ailment, no matter the twinge of pain that would occur during the conversation, it seemed that all that would fade away for him as we spoke. A hearty chuckle or two... or more... would be a warm hallmark of such conversation as we would look out onto the familiar sightlines of his farm. There was a certain enjoyable peace, a welcome calm in these moments for this was the kind of person that God had made him to be.

I am sure that many of you, if not all of you, had similar conversations with Ordell; for such moments not only took place in his home, but wherever he went. As he was out and about, as he was guest at special events, birthday parties, anniversaries and the like, you would often recognize his voice and his laugh above the hum of the surrounding conversations. And even though the move to the nursing home was a reluctant one soon those halls and walls would be blessed by the unmistakable sound of his cheerfulness. Even in the hospital there were still some of those trademark moments.

Perhaps that is what made the last few weeks and months so difficult. As friends and family, it was difficult to see him struggle as he did in his final days. But the LORD in his mercy would grant him peace. A precious cheerful soul, entangled in the cords of death,

overcome by the emotion of suffering, called out to the Lord for mercy; and the LORD heard his prayer. We give thanks that the Word of was brought to his bedside. The peace of Christ's love and redemption was shared, the coming victory of heaven, the assurance of God's presence and care even in this valley of the shadow of death were repeated and appreciated. And then in his mercy the LORD called this cheerful soul from the pain and sadness of this world to the eternal joy of heaven. **Be at rest once more...Ordell, for the LORD has been good to you.**

The LORD in his goodness, granted Ordell, with a good long life. And that life was blessed with all the relationships and all the conversations that Ordell loved so much. That man loved to talk, to visit with just about anyone, especially his family and friends, and you could tell he enjoyed the back and forth, the connection, the bonds of friendship and family that were built by all those conversations. And we give thanks for this man that was such a joy to have as a beloved brother, a dear relative, and a cherished friend.

And on this day, we give thanks especially that throughout his life the LORD blessed Ordell with the relationship that comes through faith. In his grace God made Ordell a child of God through the waters of baptism and brought him into this eternal relationship where God would speak to Ordell through his Word and Ordell could speak to the LORD in prayer. ***Because the LORD had turned his ear to his servant, his child, Ordell would call on him as long as he lived.*** He loved the LORD and in times of both difficulty and joy, in times of sorrow and happiness, that two-way conversation was treasured and utilized. God would speak to his child through the Word and this child of God had the privilege to approach the very throne of God in prayer. This relationship with Ordell and his Savior was built up and strengthened as he spoke to God in prayer and God spoke to him. This would include all the times that he stood shoulder to shoulder with the members of this congregation, as he sat among those gathered for worship in the nursing home, as well as during those visits at that table in his home with his pastor. This conversation with his God also certainly included those more personal moments of bible study and prayer.

What an undeserved privilege the immortal LORD gives to us mere mortal sinners! To those lost and rebellious because of sin God stoops down in his undeserved love to speak to us. To those crushed and dying under the curse of sin, the merciful God lifts us up to himself with his words of salvation and life. We are by nature enemies of God and yet he sends his Word to us so that we might become his friends and family, who are saved by knowing him who is life. Our God, the Holy Spirit, speaks to us through his holy Word so that we know that we are peace with our Heavenly Father through our Savior Jesus Christ.

And in his holy Word our LORD shows us just how deeply he desires a lasting relationship with us. God created human beings as those who walked and talked with him, but when sin came into world that relationship was shattered. Death is a constant reminder how that relationship was broken. People sometimes say that death is natural, but God never intended for his creatures to die. However, death came into this world because mankind's sin wrecked that relationship with us and our creator. Man and woman hid in shame and from then on sinners could no longer approach a holy God as they once did; and death came

to all because all sin. Death is therefore something that is in this way unnatural, unwanted, and because of the curse of sin the terrible grip of death reaches out for us all.

God in his great love would graciously restore the relationship between himself and us and he would also break the power of death's grip through his mercy and his steadfast love. He promised and sent his Son to restore the bond between God and man. Our Lord Jesus took our sin upon himself and washed it all away in his holy precious blood. He died in our place and rose again to give us life. God's Son obtained perfection through a holy life so that he could give that holiness to those who believed in him. He lavished his love on us so that we may be children of God, and that is what we are in Christ Jesus. The relationship between fallen sinners and God is restored only through Christ, who in his love not only washed away our sin, but crushed and defeated that feared enemy of death by his resurrection from the dead.

To those corrupted and stained by sin, to those destined to die, the holy God gives us forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation in Christ Jesus; and to top it off he also gives us the opportunity to approach God our Father in Jesus' name. We as sinners break his commands, neglect his Word, defy his commands, and yet God still sent his Son to forgive us, to defeat sin and death for us, and to open heaven's door to those who believe so that in grateful faith we might approach the holy God with our thanks and praise, our love, our service, as well as our requests, our wants, our needs, our hurts and our pains. He speaks to us through his word and we get to speak to him. Even when the words don't come the LORD tells us that he knows our hearts and the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. As believers we are given this privilege of relationship and conversation with our God until the day that we see our God face to face and we will be with the LORD forever, proclaiming his praise in the very presence of Christ the King for all eternity.

And that is the very joy that Ordell enjoys now. We will miss him dearly. We will miss the conversations, the playful smile, the hearty laugh, but through the midst of our tears today we rejoice in the God that we love, because He heard the cry of his servant Ordell and He answered him. As his body sleeps in peace this cheerful soul has been delivered from the pains of this life and now is at rest in the very presence of God. He no longer calls out to his God with groans and pains that words cannot express, but he has joined the ranks of those who walk with God and clearly and cheerfully praise the name of Jesus in the uninterrupted joy of heaven. Be at rest once more... the LORD has been good to you. Amen.