

## Encourage One Another

1Thesalonians 4:13-18

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, November 18, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There was a man named Jairus. His daughter had died. He went to Jesus. He begged Jesus, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live." Jesus went with the man. When He arrived at the man's home the mourners were already there weeping and wailing loudly over the death of the girl. She was only twelve years old. Jesus told the mourners, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping."

In this moment the Lord declared death to be temporary. It is not permanent. It does not last forever. It is transitory. It will end. It is like sleep. You go to sleep with the confidence that you will arise in the morning. By the word of the Lord you die with the confidence that you will rise at His coming. Therefore the mourners are not needed. They may go home.

Jesus enters the room where the girl is. He addresses her as if she can hear Him and even though she has no faculty to hear Him, she hears Him because of the One who is speaking to her. He tells her, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" When the Lord said this, the spirit of the girl returned to her and she got up. The Lord commanded that she be given something to eat.

And so it is with death. It is temporary. It is transitory. It is like sleep. You go to sleep and you arise in the morning. You die and arise at His coming. He does not forget the dead. He does not neglect them. He does not abandon them. He will raise those who have died in Him at His coming.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns in His glory there will be people living at that time. They will not have died. Those who are in Christ will be those who people who are eagerly waiting for His coming. They will be eagerly waiting for His coming and praying for it because they are in Christ and those who are in Christ know that when Christ comes, He is coming to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him. Those who are not in Christ do not eagerly wait for His coming and so He is not coming to bring salvation to them, but rather judgment and damnation.

If we are among those people who are alive at the coming of the Lord in glory and we are eagerly waiting for Him because we know that He is coming to bring us salvation, we will be changed in a flash in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet. Our mortal bodies will be clothed with immortality. Our corruptible bodies will be clothed with incorruption. This is necessary because those who are mortal cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but those who are immortal can. And so our Lord clothes us with immortality and incorruptibility so that we are fit to inherit the Kingdom of God.

If that is what Jesus is going to do for those who are alive when He comes, what about the dead? If He has not forgotten them or abandoned them and does not neglect them what about those dead who died in Him?

They will be raised first. Before any one of us who are alive at the coming of the Lord inherits anything of the Kingdom of God the dead will be raised first. Those who died in Christ eagerly waiting for His coming will be raised to everlasting life.

God's description of the resurrection of the dead goes like this: the body that we sow in dishonor, it is raised in glory. That is a way of saying that when we go to a funeral we commit the dead person into the ground earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, because he or she was a sinner. But when Jesus raises them, they will not be sinners. They will arise in glory. The body that we sow in weakness, it is raised in power. The weakness of the body culminates slowly over time until finally the body dies. This is a result of our dysfunction and sin. Physical death is inevitable unless the Lord returns first. But the body that it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. That is to say that when Jesus raises the dead, they will come out of their graves without any physical incapacity at all. Those who were lame will no longer be lame. Those who are blind will no longer be blind. Those who were deaf will no longer be deaf. Even things like nearsightedness will be eradicated. There will be no one with heart disease, cancer, or diabetes. Jesus will raise them in strength. The body that is sown corruptible is raised incorruptible. That means that not only does Jesus raise them without any physical infirmities, because He raises them in glory, that is without dysfunction, the dead in Christ will be raised and will be incapable of falling into dysfunction. In other words it is not merely that you will not be sick. It is that you cannot get sick. It is not merely that you are uninjured. It is that you cannot be injured. And the body that is sown mortal is raised immortal. Obviously the body is sown mortal. The reason that we are sowing it in the ground it is because it is dead. When our Lord raises the body it will be immortal along with your soul. Then you will be fitted to inherit the Kingdom which has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

When Jesus raised the dead who died in Him, then they will join those of us who are in Him who are still alive. Then together with them we will meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord always.

How will the Lord raise the dead? He will raise the dead with a cry of command and the voice of the archangel. The Lord predicted that this would happen. He said that a time is coming when those who are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of Man and those who hear will come out. They that have done good will rise to live and they that have done evil will rise to be condemned. That is why it is so important to die in Him.

The Lord gives evidence of His ability to call people from the grave by doing so. He spoke to the little girl and commanded her to arise. She could not hear Him. She was dead, but because it was the Lord speaking to her, she heard His voice and got up. The same thing happened in Nain when the Lord spoke to a widow's son who had died. He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise," and the young man sat up. He addresses the young man as if the young man can hear Him even though the young man is dead. The young man cannot hear Him, but because it is the Lord addressing him, the young man hears him and sits up and begins to speak. And finally Lazarus who had been dead for four days, the Lord calls him by name and

commands him to come out of his tomb and Lazarus comes out and the Lord tells them to take the grave clothes off of Lazarus, because Lazarus is not going to need them anymore.

Therefore during His humility the Lord commanded the dead to arise and they did. How much more in His glory with the voice of the archangel and the cry of command and the trumpet call of God will He raise all of the dead and those who died in Him will be caught up together with those who are alive who are waiting for Him. We will meet the Lord together and when we meet the Lord together we will meet each other. In this manner we will be with the Lord forever.

Our congregation faces its share of death. Some death we can see coming a long way off as when someone gets cancer or grows old and gradually loses faculty, moves into an assisted living, then a nursing home, and finally hospice. Some death we have not seen coming. It hit us blindside and now we must deal with it whether we want to deal with it or not. And those who have endured a long, lingering death envy those who went through an instantaneous loss and those who went through the instantaneous loss envy those who could see it coming and prepare for it, which just goes to show you, no matter how death comes, it is not good unless it is in Christ. Because when it is in Christ there is hope of resurrection. And the power of resurrection is His not just because He raises the dead but also because He Himself died and rose again and because He died and rose again we believe that those who die in Him will also rise again.

And so we grieve. We do grieve. There is no sense in denying it. But we do not grieve like those who have no hope. We grieve as those who do have hope. We grieve in the light of His resurrection from the dead. We grieve in the confession, "Christ is risen!" And although it is grief there is encouragement in such grief. The encouragement comes from the fact that Jesus is risen and that the dead will rise and we will meet the Lord and them together and be with the Lord and them together always.

Since there is encouragement in these words, when and while you grieve encourage one another with these words.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.