

“A Gracious Heart” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Carolyn Barendse Memorial July 27, 2024

- I. **To all the family and friends** who are gathered here today – grace, peace and mercy are yours, through our living Savior, Jesus Christ. The Word of God that engages us today comes from the Gospel of John Chapter 14, verse 1 as Jesus says, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.” ...Let us pray: Heavenly Father, may the words of my mouth and meditation of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer, Amen.
- II. **In these few weeks after Carolyn has passed**, I keep reflecting on the last time we gathered.
 - a. Lisa called me to say that the time was probably near... maybe a few days at most... and if I could come by that day or the next it would be good.
 - i. I happened to set aside time for visits that afternoon, so I just jumped in my truck and headed over.
 - ii. With prayers and a little singing, we spent time lifting her up to God... and commending her to His care...
 1. As I left, I thought to myself that she seemed to be resting peacefully, but not that close to death... yet, to my surprise I got a message later that she passed away.
 2. So ended the earthly life of a truly remarkable woman.
 - b. Carolyn and Ron came to Ascension about 15 years ago, and each time we greeted each other before or after services she was always so kind and complimentary to me.
 - i. Carolyn probably made everyone feel like that, but I felt a special connection with her because she had such a gracious heart.
 - ii. I will miss her warm greetings and kind words.
 1. Even when she stopped attending regularly because of Covid, she made a point to send cards of encouragement and thanks to me – and it brightened my day because I knew that she genuinely cared about me and the congregation even when she could not be here.
 - iii. And as the family and I got together to prepare today’s memorial, it was obvious... she’s gonna be greatly missed.
 1. We miss her.... We run through the memories and times we had with her – the struggles and the blessings... we think about the kindness that she showed to people... especially in how she cared.
 - iv. In talking to you all, that’s what I heard many times, Carolyn really cared for others...
 1. She dedicated her life to others, and that made her special.

2. That dedication was a part of the faith that she had in Jesus, and it came out in how she treated others.
 3. How could we not miss her and feel the emptiness.... that void left behind as she has now gone to be with Jesus?
- c. The love that Carolyn showed so unconditionally for others is what brings out our love for her.
- i. And I say, “brings out our love” in the present and not the past, because you love Carolyn now just as much as you ever did.
 - ii. That’s the reason there’s tears and sorrow for this time of separation.
 - iii. But just because Carolyn is no longer with us in body, it doesn’t mean we love her any less, it means we love her from a different perspective... the perspective that there is more.
 - iv. Knowing that Carolyn had faith in her Savior Jesus Christ is key to us loving her in this way – because what happened in the living room of her home the other day as her body stopped functioning is not the end... for her, it’s just the beginning.
- III. **In our Gospel lesson today**, Jesus’ disciples are troubled and upset that they will be separated from Him soon.
- a. You see, Judas was going to betray Jesus and bring the temple guards to arrest Him later that night, and very soon after, He would be hanging on a cross to pay for the sins of the entire world.
 - b. Jesus has already explained He can no longer be with them.
 - i. And so He says to them, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me,” (John 14:1).
 - ii. He wants them to know that this is not the end... that they will see Him again.
 - iii. And in fact, He has prepared a place for them so they will always be together.
 1. And when they don’t know how to get to that place, Jesus tells them, “I am the Way...and the Truth... and the Life....”
 2. You get there through Me alone.
 - c. And that is what I want to be sure you know and understand today.
 - i. Jesus is the key to the love I was talking about earlier and the fact that we love Carolyn from a different perspective.
 - ii. We know that through Jesus, Carolyn is now at home forever...
 - iii. You see, she was baptized as a little baby some 86 years ago.
 - iv. By the power of the Holy Spirit, she was brought to faith in Jesus, and the Lord kept her in the faith her whole life until that fateful day on July 1, 2024 when she was called home to glory.
 - v. And the most important gift I could imagine that she left us is that she knew the Way – it was faith in Jesus Christ.
- IV. **Carolyn is now free from all the trials and suffering she endured.**

- a. The health problems, the memory troubles, the worry, the losses - all of that is gone, and as Revelation 21:4 says about those who now live in glory with Him, “[God] 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.”
 - b. She will never shed another tear.
 - c. She knew the Way... or I should say, her faith in Jesus knew the Way.
- V. **How much do you miss your wife**, your sister, your mom, your grandmother, your friend Carolyn?
- a. Only you know the answer to that question.
 - b. But hear the words of Jesus, “don’t let your hearts be troubled, believe in Me.”
 - c. As you believe in Jesus, the one Who died and rose again for you to prepare your place in heaven.. your future has Carolyn in it!
 - d. I can just imagine those kind and caring eyes of Carolyn as she opens her arms to welcome you home one day – as she hugs you tight and whispers in your ear... “you made it!”
 - e. Don’t let your hearts be troubled, believe in Jesus. AMEN.