

Theme: Thanks Be to God!

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 (NIV)

⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- ⁵² 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. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵ "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

*In the name of Jesus, in Whom we have victory,
dear family and friends of Don Drews.*

- † **“Thanks be to God!”** Those are words you’d expect to hear around Thanksgiving Day. But on this particular Thanksgiving weekend, are they really appropriate?
- † Losing a beloved husband, father, and grandfather in the hours before Thanksgiving Day officially started might leave us wondering, “What’s there to be thankful for?”
- † Now, Ida, and family and friends of Don, I don’t want to in any way minimize the grief you feel at the loss of Don from this life. He will be missed greatly in so many ways, to be sure.
- † But as you also know, and have even expressed to me a number of times over this past weekend, there is much to be thankful for. Many reasons to say **“Thanks be to God!”**
- † First of all, look at the life that God gave to Don. I mean, have you read his obituary yet? That’s the “abbreviated” version too, folks! Wow. What an impressive amount of gifts and talents Don was given. What a full life he lived! He was a very intelligent, talented, and capable man. **“Thanks be to God!”**
- † Don was a very faithful man. His life was filled with faithful service to his faithful wife, Ida, of 64 years, and to his family: his four children, his six grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.
- † His life was also filled with faithful service to his Savior. He took to heart and put into practice the words of his confirmation passage, which we just read: **“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).** Don was a faithful member and served on the board of elders and as chairman and choir director in several of the congregations in which he served during his lifetime. Don was a faithful man. **“Thanks be to God!”**
- † Don was also a forgiven man. Ida, you probably know this better than anyone here today: Don was not perfect. He needed a Savior from his sins, just like we all do. And so, as we gather to remember and celebrate the life that Don lived it is important for us to remember that it wasn’t Don’s great gifts and talents or his faithfulness that gives us reason to truly give thanks to God: It is God’s faithfulness! It was God who in His rich grace and mercy made Don one of His own children at his baptism just a few weeks after he was born. It was God and His faithfulness that caused that saving faith in Don to grow and be put into action and preserved throughout his life. It was God’s faithfulness that kept Don in that faith even till the very end of his life.

- † Because of God’s faithfulness, we can gather here today and say **“Thanks be to God!”** Because of God’s faithfulness Don is a victorious man. Listen again to the words of our text, **“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”** ⁵⁵ **“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”** ⁵⁶ **The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.** ⁵⁷ **But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).
- † **“He gives us the victory”**—victory over sin, death, and even hell itself—**“through our Lord Jesus Christ!”** That victory is Don’s, and that victory is yours and mine through Jesus. His perfect life, His innocent sacrifice for our sins on the cross, and His glorious resurrection from the dead *guarantee* that Don’s last day on earth was not his last day of life, but only the gateway to eternal life! Jesus’ life death, and resurrection guarantees the same victory of life over death for us as well.
- † A couple of weeks ago while Don was recovering from his hip surgery I had a devotion with him and read from the end of **Romans chapter 8**. Let me read those verses to you, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...** ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** ³⁸ **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,** ³⁹ **neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**
- † After reading those verses I asked Don if he felt much like a “conqueror.” He grinned and said in his dry sense of humor, “Oh, I’d say not.” But he knew what that text said, and he appreciated the reminder that day. It doesn’t say we “feel like more than conquerors” through Christ, but that we are more than conquerors through Christ! Nothing that life can throw at us, or even death itself can change that or take us from His love for us.
- † If we were to somehow be able to ask Don that same question today, “Do you feel like more than a conqueror?” What do you think his answer would be?
- † **“Thanks be to God!”** his answer would be a resounding, “Yes!” For he is now experiencing the victory Christ has won for him in all its fullness for all eternity.
- † Our text points us to one more reason we have to give thanks to God. It reminds us that we will see Don again! Not in weakness or sickness or pain, but clothed in glory and immortality: **“For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** ⁵³ **For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”** (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).
- † We will see him again, with Jesus—because of Jesus!—forever, in our heavenly home where there will be **“no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying”** and **“no more pain”** (Revelation 21:1-4)
- † Yes, **“Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 Corinthians 15:57 NIV). Amen.

Hymn: “The Lord’s My Shepherd” –p. 4 in bulletin