

In Jesus' name. Amen.

People Loved by God, especially you, Ayako and Sara,

It was not too long ago, only 3 years and 2 months, that we gathered here for Nick's memorial.

On that day, we heard a text from St. John's Gospel: the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

We rejoiced in the confession of Mary, that Jesus is **the Christ, the Son of God**,
and that those who die in Him, as Lazarus had, **will rise again on the last day**.

Nick had chosen that text as a confession of his own faith in Jesus and the resurrection to life eternal.

Today, we hear another text from St. John's Gospel.

Another text of Jesus giving comfort at a very uncomfortable time.

We read from the 14th chapter of St. John, beginning at the 18th verse.

As follows in Jesus' name:

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, He it is who loves Me. And He who loves me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Jesus spoke these words on the night that He was betrayed, the night that began what we call His passion.

He knew that within the next 18 hours, He would be scourged, crucified, die, and be buried.

He knew that it would look like their Lord had lost the fight; that the old evil foe had won.

He knew that, just as **the world would see Him no more**,

so also, for **a little while**, the disciples would feel lost, confused, frightened, and alone.

And yet, He would have them comforted during this difficult time in their lives.

He would give them hope in this seemingly hopeless situation.

And so He tells them, **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."**

They had been following Him for the last 3 years.

How close do you suppose this bond was that He had developed with them?

Like a father to his beloved children?

Even now, these men were dependent upon Him and His instruction.

Even this evening, they would need His rebuke for disputing about which of them was the **"greatest."**

So for Jesus to talk to them as if they were His children, as if they would feel orphaned at His death, is not so cold, but really a considerate thought.

But taking a step back even further, who really should have been comforting whom?

Jesus was the One who would go through all the suffering, crucifixion, and death for the world's sin;

He would be abandoned by His friends and disciples... mocked by ungodly and evil men;

He would be the One who would be truly forsaken by His heavenly Father,

as He innocently died to pay for everyone else's sins.

The disciples should have been comforting Him;

yet He is the One doing the comforting, even as He knew that they would flee from Him.

Such love their Savior had for them.

It is the same love that your Savior had for Diane, and has for you.

Jesus desires that in this world of sin's corruption that you also would be comforted.

It was hard for Diane when Nick died 3 years ago. He was the bread winner.

He took care of all the finances and all the needs of the family.

She had not needed to concern herself with how to keep the books.

He had been the one contending with the gov't about the aid their family needed;

now she had to pick up that mantle, though really she was unprepared to do it.

And you know how incredibly lonely she was without her husband of 35 years.

They had been married basically since her graduation from high school.

And all this, while dealing with poor health herself – something that she had dealt with her whole life.

In 2018, both Diane and Nick had had heart attacks about a month apart.

And especially in these last few years, breathing was particularly difficult for her.

Her medical concerns kept her in a rather constant state of alarm, along with her financial needs.

And even with much help from friends & family, more assistance seemed to be needed.

Like all of us, she wrestled with trusting in God's decisions and His promises.

Diane was not a perfect person. Nor did she claim to be.

In fact, the opposite. She readily confessed her sins, even as she struggled against them.

But her struggles and her difficulties served a purpose, just as they did for Nick and do for all of us:
they drove her to her Savior.

During our home visits, after hearing of the issues that she was struggling with presently,
her pastors would lead her in a meditation on God's promises.

How He has kept every promise He has made... in His own time (which is always the right time).

And not the least of these promises was sending the Son of God into this world to redeem her.

She believed these promises, even as she lamented the circumstances of her life.

She would be reminded of her Baptism,

how the Lord had called her His own dear child, and given her His holy and eternal name;

how the Lord has washed her sins away in Jesus' blood and given her His holiness;

how the Lord had promised that He would be **with her always, even to the end of the age.**

And she would always ask for the Lord's Supper.

It was something that, I believe, was instilled in her especially during Nick's cancer.

Toward the last few months of Nick's earthly life,

both Nick and Diane received Christ's crucified and risen body & blood regularly once a week.

She wanted the forgiveness and strength Jesus promised to give as He communed with her.

She wanted to be certain that He was with her, even now... even as she felt lonely.

...

Jesus' promise to His disciples on the night He was betrayed is true for all His disciples.

He said, **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.... Because I live, you also will live."**

Notice how confidently Jesus spoke about His own death and resurrection.

Yes, He would indeed die. And they would not see Him for a little while,

but He would just as surely rise from the dead and grant them

the same blessed and glorious resurrection to life eternal.

Our Savior has not left us as orphans.

He continues to come to us today through His Word and Sacraments.
He continues to speak to you, to comfort you in uncomfortable situations,
to rebuke you when sin rules in your heart,
to forgive you as He leads you to forsake your sin in repentance,
to encourage you when you recognize your weakness,
to strengthen you against the temptations and struggles ahead.

Ayako and Sara,

You know well enough that parents, when they die,
have no power over the fact that they will leave their children as orphans.
You know that neither Nick nor Diane desired to leave you alone in this world, especially so early.
They both loved you very much and desired the best for you.

And in reality, they have not left you alone.

When they brought you to the waters of Holy Baptism, they joined you to Jesus Christ, your Savior.
In that act, they did the best thing they could do for you, they gave you a heavenly family,
bringing you into the family of God.

There, in that water, God became your eternal Father;
Jesus, your brother;
and the Holy Spirit, your comforter.

They connected you to the promises that they themselves lived and died in,
that Jesus is with you always, even to the end of the age.

While you might FEEL lost, confused, frightened, and alone,

KNOW that the Lord has kept every one of His promises to Diane, even as He had also to Nick.
He loved your parents. He did not leave them.

In fact, He has forever relieved them of any and every affliction and granted to them eternal comfort.
He loves you. He will not leave you as orphans, but has given you His Word,
just as He said to His disciples,

Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, He it is who loves Me.

And He who loves me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Continue to study His Word, that He may be manifested, or revealed, to you throughout your life.

Keep His Word in your hearts. Meditate on it.

Like the disciples, be corrected by it to repentance, and believe it for life,
for comfort and peace in Christ's forgiveness in this life,
and for joy in the life to come.

People Loved by God, especially you, Ayako and Sara,

The Lord Himself loves you. He has given you His Word, "**Because I live, you also will live.**"

Thanks be to God.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria