

Ginger Lawson Funeral

Today we gather together in the worship of God, celebrating the life of our sister and my wife Ginger Hebert Lawson. She joins us for worship today for the last time ... We meet laughing and parted laughing ... not many people are so blessed to have a wife like that . . . words seem so inadequate this morning ...

Ginger's 91 year old mother is here and no mother should have to bury a child.

What we need in a time like this is revelation from God, not just words or pontificating ...

- We need something that speaks of certainties, not just hopes.**
- We need something that speaks with authority and assurance,**
- We need something that provides true comfort and gives something and someone to believe in ... to trust as we go on from here.**
- We need the authoritative, comforting "Thus saith the Lord!" the revelation of Scripture.**

And God has not left us without Revelation in a time like this. He has spoken clearly, concisely and with authority. Let's look at what the Bible, God's Word promises the person who dies in the Lord.

These passages were written especially for those in a time of sorrow ...

Psalm 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD [*is*] the death of his saints.

Ginger may have died a martyr's death ... it has been 11 months ago today ...

II Corinthians 5:6 Therefore [*we are*] always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

God in His mercy must have known that Ginger needed this 11 months of suffering in this fleshly body to perfect her spirit for the heavenly shore.

Now our job is to remain faithful unto death ...

II Corinthians 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen

II Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Where is Ginger now? She is with the Lord ... What's it like there ... ?

I Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Barbara Hover Kennemore who is here with us today gave Ginger and I ten days at the magnificent Hyatt Regency Hotel in Waikiki Beach, Hawaii and that is as close to heaven on earth as we can come in this world ... I have seen almost everything in this world, I been to Ft. Worth, Woolworth and Leavenworth. I have experienced the Regency club banquet with fresh vine ripe pineapple and strawberries you would not believe, I been to a luau at the Mona Lou at Waikiki Beach ... and heaven is unimaginably better ...

But we, as Abraham live by faith. Abraham never had a house but lived as a nomad in tents in this world ... he as well as we are longing for the promise of everlasting life in the city of God. As the Hebrew writer:

Hebrews 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Hebrews 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Revelations 21:1-2 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelations 21:16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. (1,377 miles X 4 Square)

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

Isaiah 26:19 Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Job 19:23-27 Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

The 23rd Psalm is a metaphor of the Lord God who appears as our Personal Shepherd King.

Psalm 23:1-4 The LORD [*is*] my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Psalm 23:1 The LORD [*is*] my shepherd; I shall not want.

It is indeed God Himself who here appears as the personal Shepherd of His children; and in the New Testament, when Jesus Christ said,

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd, and know my [*sheep*], and am known of mine.

In these words Jesus makes a bold and undeniable claim of Divinity.

"I shall not want" this as the topic of the whole psalm. "This is the leading thought, the essential idea; and it is carried throughout the psalm."

Giving us the idea of not only I shall not want but I will be supplied.

Psalm 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ...". Any person who knows anything about sheep knows that they will never lie down when they are hungry.

Therefore, the scene here is the green pastures where the sheep have eaten their fill and then when no longer hungry they lie down.

Ginger no longer hungers or thirsts for any good thing and her rest is sweet ...

"He leadeth me beside the still waters ..." The literal Hebrew here reads "waters of rest." This entire verse speaks of the tranquility that belongs to one in fellowship with God. Here the Old English Psalter beautifully reads: **"On the waters of refreshing forth He me brought ..."**

The one dominating thought of this Psalm, is: "all" that God does for His people.

The seven-fold activity of God is here:

1) He satisfies our hunger; (2) He leads us by the refreshing still waters; (3) He restores us when we have fallen away; (4) He guides us in the way of righteousness; (5) He abides `with us' even through death; (6) He gives us `a table' in His kingdom; and (7) He cares for us eternally."

Psalm 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"He restoreth my soul ..." This is the thought of the shepherd metaphor in Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. The human application is that of restoring and converting Christians who have fallen away from duty. Some writers would soften what is said here by rendering "refresheth" instead of "restoreth"; but "The verb used here refers to `repentance,' or `conversion.'" In this context, the "restoring" or "bringing back" of the sheep," pictures the deeper renewal of the man or woman of God, spiritually perverse or ailing as we may be."

"He leadeth me ... for his name's sake ..." Why does God perform all these wonderful activities for His children? It is not for the purpose, Of upholding His reputation for fair dealings with His people." "It is not merely because it is His nature to do so. It is because the ones cared for are called by God's own name and it is to display the glory of His grace

The prophet Isaiah gave the correct answer in Isaiah 43:1-7. "I have redeemed thee ... thou art mine ... I have called thee by my name ... I have created thee for my glory"

Those persons who are the object of the kind of protection and guidance assured in this psalm, in our dispensation, are called Christians ... yes we are called by God's own name or as Isaiah says is a name the mouth of the Lord shall name Isaiah 62:2. No one is "called by God's name" (Isaiah 43:7) who has not been born again of the water and the Spirit as Jesus says in John 3.

Psalm 23: 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [*art*] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

"... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death ... “ Notice death is a place we go through, not a place we go to ... and it’s only a shadow an illusion, no shadow of a gun has ever hurt you, no shadow of a knife has ever cut you,

The shepherd metaphor in this reference envisions an occasion when the shepherd is required to lead his sheep through some dangerous, forested valley, where the paw of the wolf, the bear and the lion and other enemies of the sheep were lurking; but the safety of the sheep is assured by the presence of the shepherd. In the human application of it, the soul that trusts in the Lord will most surely pass through many dark valleys, even that of death itself at last; but no fear will be felt because the Lord will be with his own:

Matthew 18:20 “...and, lo, I am with you always, [*even*] unto the end of the world.”

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ...” "The rod was a short oaken club for defense; the staff was a longer pole used for climbing or leaning upon it. Eastern shepherds still carry both." "The rod was often tipped with iron."

The Shepherds crook was used to lay hold upon their horns or legs to pull them out of the thicket or the murky mire ... they are also the rod of correction and the staff of support.

Psalm 23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over

Here we have a gracious and generous host who provides a banquet for his guest. The table is a prepared one, presumably loaded with bountiful abundance of the most choice foods. It is a banquet of the "brimming cup" and the anointed head. Furthermore, all our enemies witness all of this.

Inasmuch as Christ himself claimed to be the "Good Shepherd" of this passage,

We can find overtones of the Lord's table

Luke 22:29-30 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, ...

Of course the Kingdom He has appointed unto us is the Church and we partake of His table in His kingdom every Lord’s day where the bread and the fruit of the

vine are symbols of his love. As we worship at that table, we remember Him the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

We show forth the Lord's death till He comes. The Lord himself is with us in the assembly; and there are onlookers. Our enemies are also looking on! The table spread foretelling His conquering love is the Table of Victory."

The marvelous assurance of this psalm is the Old Testament equivalent of

Romans 8:31-39 What shall we then say to these things? If God [*be*] for us, who [*can be*] against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [*It is*] God that justifieth. 34 Who [*is*] he that condemneth? [*It is*] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [*shall*] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The imagery of the great banquet here is an integral part of the whole Biblical panorama that includes: "Joseph's feeding his brothers even though they had sold him into slavery (Genesis 43:34), Jesus' feeding the five thousand Matthew 14:19, the parable of the Great Supper Luke 14:15-24, and that of the marriage feast of the Bridegroom Matthew 22:1-14 and Revelation 19:9

Psalm 23: 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Every shepherd has a sheep dog but the Good Shepherd had 2 of them one called goodness and one called mercy. To keep us in the fold and fetch us when we wander ...

The Anchor Bible renders Psalms 23:6 here as follows:

**"Surely goodness and kindness will attend me, all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh for days without end.**

We as Christians believe and trust with faith and assurance the promises of Jesus found in:

John 11:25-26 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Ephesians 1:19-20 And what [*is*] the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set [*him*] at his own right hand in the heavenly [*places*],

If the blood of a dead savior is so powerful it can pay for the sins of the whole wide world if they would only believe and come to God in the appointed way ... how much more powerful is a living resurrected Savior seated at God's own right hand making intercession for us sinners who call upon Him as children ...

I Thessalonians 4: 13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

THE SLEEP OF DEATH

This beloved metaphor was frequently used by our Lord himself, as in the instances of Jairus' daughter Mark 5:39 and of Lazarus John 11:11, and quickly adopted wherever Christianity was known. The very word "cemetery," "*Koimeterion*," is derived from the word used here, *koimao*, and means `a place of sleep

I Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

The glorious promises of this passage are for them that "sleep Jesus." Thus, again, the supreme importance of being in Christ" appears as a mandatory prerequisite of receiving any Christian blessing. The apostle John wrote: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord Revelation 14:13;

I Thessalonians 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [*and*] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

There is no disadvantage to those who die before the coming of the Lord; as a matter of fact, having already undergone the necessary change that must come upon all, they are a step nearer the resurrection and shall therefore "rise first"

I Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Paul's words are the best way to declare the sudden manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ at the cataclysmic end of this age. The manifestation will be upon the whole earth, and not merely upon some part of it;

I Thessalonians 4:17 Then we which are alive [*and*] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

To meet the Lord in the air ... Not to dwell with him "in the air," but then to accompany him to the new heaven and the new earth ... that city 4 square that "where in righteousness dwells" ... that we read about earlier;

I Thessalonians 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Psalms 34:8 O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

I Corinthians 15:1-3 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,

Sources: KJV, theWord.com Coffman's Commentary, Clarkes Commentary, Funeral Messages for believers