

You Want Me To **WHAT?**

During this past year, many of us have suffered the loss of a loved one. We have wept for their loss, and mingled fond memories with feelings of emptiness. We have cried out to God in our grief and sorrow, and wondered what purpose could possibly be served by their death. At times like these the last thing many of us want to hear is, “Don’t be sad, be happy for them they’re in a better place now”. Thus the title of my sermon today, you want me to **what?** Each of us must deal with grief in our own way, and while many well-meaning people will try to offer words of encouragement, the words will ring hollow, unless they are sincere.

A stranger gave to me one of the most comforting moments I experienced during the loss of my mother-in-law. During the last few weeks of Mrs. Weaver’s life different aides and nurses would come to the house to bathe her and check her vital signs. It was during one of these visits that a nurse offered me a

comforting picture of what death must be like. She said that this story was from a book she had read, and so to the best of my memory I share it with you.

Imagine two men standing on the dock of a harbor as a sailing ship departs. It’s beautiful three-masts schooner in full regalia. The sails are filled, the colorful flags are whipping, as the wind begins to push her out into the open ocean. The two men stand and watch as the ship slowly shrinks in the distance and eventually dips out of sight below the horizon. One man says, “She gone, how sad.”. The other man says take heart for on the other side out of sight, beyond where we can see, people are waiting with their arms open wide to welcome her home.

I found that very comforting and it reminded me of other comforting words in the Bible.

1Thes 4:14-18

14) We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with

Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15) According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16) For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17) After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18) Therefore encourage each other with these words.

(NIV) Remember the last shall be first and the first last?

1Thes 5:9-10

9) For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10) He died for us so that, whether we

are awake or asleep, we may live together with him.

(NIV)

Rev 7:9-17

9) After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10) And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11) All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12) saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" 13) Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-- who are they, and where did they

come from?" 14) I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15) Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. 16) Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. 17) For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
(NIV)

In today's Gospel message, Jesus tells His audience that those who mourn will be comforted. I'm here to say that is a true statement. And if that is true, then the rest of what Jesus tells us is true too.

Matt 7:7-12

7) "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8) For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. 9) "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10) Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11) If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! 12) So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
(NIV)

Just as our sight depends on light and shadow for images to be visible, our lives are brought into clarity by the various emotions we experience. Jesus Christ was human completely. He experienced happiness and joy, as well as sorrow and sadness. Remember the

shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35. Jesus wept. In this verse Jesus is crying for the death of His friend Lazarus. Later, Jesus brings Lazarus back from the dead. And one day, He will do the same for us too.