

Concordia Lutheran Conference

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn

for the

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity

– Saturday –

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. – I Thessalonians 4:13

Regarding our loved ones who fell asleep in Christ and departed this life for heaven, and whose temporary resting-place for their bodies we had to prepare with bitter grief and sorrow, the Apostle “*would not have us to be ignorant.*” Instead, he would instruct and comfort us, so that we sorrow not as do those who have no hope, no expectation of anything extending beyond death and the grave. We children of God (for only as true believers does the Apostle comfort us) believe that “*Jesus died and rose again*” (v. 14) – that He was delivered because of our offenses to take their guilt upon Himself, and was raised again because of our justification in testimony that His satisfaction of divine justice was accepted by God as payment-in-full to make us right with Him again (Romans 4:25). “*Even so*” – just as surely as He did all of that – will God bring with Him on the Last Day all those that are fallen asleep in Jesus; He will bring them up from the grave as He did the body of the Lord Jesus. Yes, this is an unfailingly sure promise of the Lord, proclaimed by the Apostle, that even those Christians who still will be living when the Lord comes on the last day shall in no wise “prevent” or precede to glory those who are resting in their graves (v. 15). “*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*” (v. 16). Then those children of God who at that time are still alive on the earth, together with the dead that have been raised, will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus all the children of God, including we also, together with our loved ones who departed in faith, will ever be with the Lord (v. 17). This the Apostle says to us “*by the word of the Lord*” (v. 15a). We “*comfort [ourselves] with these words*” (v. 18). We sorrow indeed when our dear ones depart from us in death. But we do not sorrow as do those that have no hope, who have no sure expectation as to what will happen when the Lord come again. Our loved may precede us home to heaven in temporal death; but they will not be forgotten or left behind in the resurrection. In fact, their bodies will be raised “*incorruptible*” (I Corinthians 15:52b) first, and then we who are still alive (if we too have not already joined them as “*the dead in Christ*”) “*shall be changed*” (v. 52c). “*And so shall we [and they] ever be with the Lord*” (I Thessalonians 4:17b) according to His gracious promises (Mark 16:16a; Revelation 2:10; I John 3:2; Romans 8:18; Matthew 24:13; and so many more).

PRAYER – Lord Jesus, Thou alone knowest them that are Thine in the true and saving faith. In confidence of Thy promise, I look forward even now to being counted among “the dead in Christ” when Thou comest in the clouds of heaven on the Last Day, graciously to be received with all true believers, body and soul, into the everlasting mansions of heaven. To that blessed end, keep me steadfast in the true faith though Thy precious Word and grant me to see Thee, my living Redeemer, face to face, for Thy great mercy’s sake. Amen.

There I shall dwell forever, no more a parting guest, with all Thy blood-bought children in everlasting rest, the pilgrim toils forgotten, the pilgrim conflicts o’er, all earthly griefs behind me, eternal joys before.

Hymn 586, 7

* Scripture reading for today: Revelation 14:13; 1 Corinthians 15:55-58 Theme: The Christian’s Death