

Rick Hunter funeral 9/8/10

CW379 – Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

Ps 23

Psalms 111

Jeremiah 33:2,3,14,15

John 11:1-44

CW152 st.1,3,5,8 – I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Sermon based on John 11:1-44

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

As we near the anniversary of September 11, 2001, there are some who still speculate that more could have been done to prevent that tragedy which has affected people all over the world. An investigation is beneficial, if the facts found lead to security measures that avoid this type of catastrophe in the future.

“If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Both sisters said it. There’s something more you, Jesus, could have done to prevent this tragedy, this sadness. Because there’s so much more that we wanted to do together, but now, his life has been cut short. He was sick. We sent for you and you didn’t come. And now he’s dead.

Is there more that we could have done? Could the doctors have done more? Could Rick have done more to prevent this? Could we have prayed more? Because there’s so much more that we wanted to do, there’s so much more that Rick could have done. He had a brand new hip! He could have spread the love for his Savior that he loved to do. He could have put his compassion and generosity for complete strangers into practice, his love for family members. With that new hip he could have caught hundreds of more fish, constructed something beautiful out of wood, or mown your lawn. If only we had done more, would he still be here? We might feel to blame. Maybe we even blame our God. If only you had done something more...

“Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died.” And yet, there Lazarus lay, cold and lifeless in the tomb. And the Son of God weeps. He grieves because he loved that man, a dear friend. We can only speculate, but perhaps what hurts Jesus most is witnessing the awful affects of sin that has done its work on his friend, and has been ruining his creation and its creatures since the Garden of Eden, bringing only sadness, grief, suffering and death.

There’s comfort here in these two words, “Jesus wept.” He knows your pain this afternoon. He sympathizes with you. He understands what it means to lose a loved one to death. And he promises that he will not abandon nor leave you in this time of grieving. We are sad because we

feel a sense of loss. We grieve because of the sobering reality of our sin. Sin has done its work. Sin has accomplished its goal. Sin has carried out God's command, "The souls who sins is the one who will die." It does not matter what think we could do, sin will run its course with each and every one of us. And in sorrow we cry out, "Lord, if you had been here... you could have done something...."

He did do something... God demands, "The soul who sins is the one who will die." All mankind deserves to die for their sin. And not just a physical death, but an eternal death in the fires of hell. But God doesn't want that. He wants all people to be saved. So he does something to undo the effects and power of sin. The Son of God comes to earth, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, to do what God demands of each of us, so that we might live and not die. Jesus comes to live a life free from sin, so that those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus demonstrates his power over sin by not sinning even once, by not falling into temptation, not even once. Then he takes your sins and your sinful nature to the cross with him. There he allows them to be nailed to that cross with his hands and his feet, and suffers the fires of hell for us. There on the cross he puts to death with his body our sins and our sinful nature. He dies as the sin of the world. Jesus removes sin's power forever. For those who believe in Christ Jesus as their Savior, Jesus promises, your sins are forgiven, you have eternal life, you have been saved from your sinful nature, from death and from the devil. "Lord, if you had been here, you could have done something..." he did do something, he came to save us. He came to save Rick from his sin and from death. This is the good news that we need to hear this afternoon.

The good news we need to hear is that through Holy Baptism, the washing with water and the Word of God, Jesus gave Rick Hunter his victory over sin. In baptism, Rick received Christ's sinfree life. In baptism, Rick received the assurance that Christ put his sins to death on the cross. It is in baptism Christ first raised Rick from death, spiritual death. For by nature, we are born into this world as sinful human beings. In the waters of baptism, Jesus promises that Rick Hunter was raised from his spiritual death, to a new life in Christ. Through the water and the Word, Rick was brought into a right relationship with his God. Through baptism, that Rick was washed free of sin, and we know that today Rick Hunter stands before his Creator holy and righteous, he stands before the Judge of all innocent. Could Rick have done anything to accomplish any of this – with all of Rick's compassion and love and generosity? No. Not one single act of love earned God's favor. Only Christ's acts of love accomplished this all for Rick and Christ did he it all for you.

Not only has Rick Hunter received the power of Christ's death, but also his power over death. Both sisters said it, but perhaps it was premature. They knew his power. They knew what he could do. And he does do something more. Even though the body of his dear friend had already begun to decay, having been in the tomb for 4 days, Jesus demonstrates his power over death and decay. With the power of his word, he causes his friend's heart to beat, the blood to race, to lungs to breathe in that cold air in the cave, and the muscles begin to flex. By raising Lazarus from his grave, Jesus reassures you that he has the power to raise this body again one day. And he proved it again. Although death wrapped its mighty chains around our Savior on the cross, Jesus demonstrates his power over death by snapping its chains and raising his own body from his tomb. Although death has grabbed Rick, it will not hold him forever. Again, through

baptism Jesus promises that Rick has been given Christ's resurrection.

And Jesus offers these words of comfort for you, **“He has fallen asleep. I will go and wake him up.”** Oh, how we wish he would do that today! Isn't it a comfort to know that Jesus himself calls death a sleep, from which we will wake? Our dear friend Rick has fallen asleep. His body will rest from its labors; no more pain, no more tears or sadness for our dear friend. And right now, he is enjoying time with his Savior Jesus in the eternal joys of heaven. And on the Last Day, your husband and friend and brother will rise again. This body will be raised, made new and be reunited with his spirit to live, body and soul in heaven with all the saints and with all of us who believe.

There is no greater comfort today than to hear your Savior say, **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”** Rick professed his belief in his Savior Jesus. This is why we will sing at the end of the service, “I know that my Redeemer lives, what comfort this sweet sentence gives, he lives, he lives, who once was dead.” We know and are confident that today will not end in sadness, because he lives, we too shall live. For Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Amen!