

Chris is at Home with Jesus, the Savior of All

Psalm 23, 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 and St. John 14.1-6

A Funeral Message for the Family and Friends of Chris Elliott

27 April 2021

Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

“Let not your hearts be troubled.” Those are tough words to swallow, right now, aren’t they? Of course, our hearts are troubled! This just isn’t right! This cannot be real! How is it that your husband, your father, your son, your grandson, your brother, your son-in-law, your colleague, your coach, your teacher, your mentor, our friend, and our brother in Christ is dead, especially at such a young age, especially when, by all human standards, he was a good man? Of course your hearts, our hearts are troubled, agitated, and disturbed.

These words of Jesus were spoken hours before His own death. He spoke them in the Upper Room after He had told the first disciples of His impending death by crucifixion - as well as His resurrection the third day in order to save the world. He told them after He had washed their feet, after He had told them that one of them would betray Him, after He had told Peter that he would deny Him 3 times before the rooster crowed.

Jesus knew that the hearts of His disciples were agitated and troubled by His words then and He knows where your hearts and minds are at as we gather here today. He knows how upset you are, that we are, that Chris, Mr. Elliott, or however you knew him has died. Jesus knows this which is why He spoke those words then and why He has spoken them to us today.

Jesus knows because He is the Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus had the same feelings that we have though without sin. In fact, St. John uses this word for “troubled” 4 times, once in our reading and the other 3 occurrences to describe Jesus’ own state of mind: Jesus’ spirit was “troubled” at everyone sobbing outside Lazarus’ tomb, His soul and spirit was “troubled” as He considered His impending sufferings and death at the cross.

All this relates that Jesus has been where we are. He knows the depth and breadth of your sorrow, your hearts’ agitation, your pain, and your grief. He knows and not only does He know now, He knew it during His earthly ministry, when He lived among us. For God has always been troubled by what our first parents’ sin and our sin has brought into the world and brought into our lives. God’s own heart was agitated and disturbed by the disobedience and rebellion we manifest in our lives and by its consequences and results for us.

For this is not the way God intended things. He created this world and universe and all that is in it good and perfect; it was working as He intended. Man lived in His good creation and in righteousness until that day when, tempted by the Devil, we sinned and brought pain, sickness, disease, and death into the world and our lives. However, on that day, despite our sin and our rebellion in Adam, God promised that He would do something about it, that the Seed, the woman’s Offspring would come, He would defeat the Devil and though He would die in the process, He would rise again to restore all things to Himself as the Savior of all.

Jesus came into the world for this very purpose. He came because only He could get us home. To use a shaky baseball analogy, all you and I could do as sinners is whiff on every pitch and break every rule. So Jesus came and stood at the plate on our behalf. He “pitch-hit” for all us: He kept every rule, hit every pitch perfectly, and rounded the bases to home when He came into the world for Chris, for you, for me, for all in order to save us, to redeem us, to restore us, to bring everyone who believes on Him to the new creation.

This is what Jesus means when He says that He had to go and prepare a place for us, so that everyone who believes on Him as Savior, would live and dwell with Him forever. This entrance into the Father’s house required His entry into the world the first Christmas, it required that He suffer and die to satisfy the

punishment for sin, to open to us the doors of the Father's house. He rose the first Easter to show He had saved the world and ascended on high since He had prepared a place in His Father's house for Chris, for all who believe.

This eternal life comes only through Jesus because He alone is the Door; He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Only by believing on Jesus as the Son of God made flesh, as the God-Man crucified for our salvation and raised for our justification, as Savior of all, is one able to enter the Father's house.

Chris knew this and believed this to the bottom of his Buckeye-loving heart. Baptized into Christ, he was cleansed of his sins and began to experience the new life in Jesus, since in Jesus, the first-fruits of the resurrection, Chris had been, like all believers, made to be a first-fruit of the new creation, a witness and testimony to every person and to the whole creation of the restoration to come when Jesus comes to judge the living and the dead.

Chris believed and knew that Jesus, his Savior, had given him a place in the Father's house where all is restored, yes, even more, where all is glorified in Christ and all will dwell in the glory of God the Father. Chris had the confidence that no matter what came His way his eternity was safe and secure in his Savior and that through faith in Jesus he had nothing to fear, that no sickness, not even death, could rob him of his room in the Father's house, that nothing in all this creation could steal away the promise of the resurrection of the body and live everlasting in Jesus the Savior of all.

Greatly blessed with the gift of salvation and this confidence, Chris lived and trusted in the Lord Jesus who walked with him as a shepherd does his sheep. He lived in a way that revealed his gratitude for the Lord's blessings in his life, a life which ran over into our lives, showering us with the goodness and the love of the Lord which came through him to you.

The Spirit of the Lord declares: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Blessed indeed, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!" Chris was blessed, blessed with the forgiveness of sins, blessed with life with Jesus in this life and for the life to come, blessed with the assurance of salvation sure and true in his Lord and Savior Jesus.

Blessed by the Lord, the Lord made his life to be a blessing to you. Chris' labors, his deeds, his works now follow him and will have lasting impact in your lives as works that you strive to imitate, as memories that you will cherish, as blessings the Lord has given you through Chris and which brought glory to His name since Chris let his light, his love for Jesus shine throughout his life and in all he did.

Chris is now at rest and at home with Jesus, the Savior of all. As believers we look forward to when Jesus returns and restores all things, when He returns and raises Chris' body and the bodies of all believers, when we are reunited with Chris in glorious resurrected bodies, we look to Jesus in the days and months to come just as Chris did throughout his life. We look to Him as our hearts are troubled, disturbed, and agitated knowing that in Jesus we have a Lord who understands and who will help us in our time of need. We look to Jesus and know that as our Good Shepherd He walks with us - even when we are not aware of His presence - and He will lead us in His paths, He will restore our souls, He will give us peace and strength so that our hearts will become less and less troubled, so that our hearts will rest more and more in His promises as our Lord and Savior.

Even as Chris was there for you, so is Jesus even more so and now more than ever. He is there in your caring brothers and sisters in Christ and all who have supported and will support you in the days to come. Jesus is here for you and will be there for you always for Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, as the Son of God who has prepared a place for you also in the Father's house, Jesus will never abandon you. He will be at your side always until He takes you to His side to be with Him forever.

He will be with you as you wrestle with your troubled hearts for, as the hymnist wrote: "I know that my Redeemer lives...He lives to bless me with His love; He lives to plead for me above; He lives my hungry soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need. He lives to grant me rich supply; He lives to guide me with His eye; He lives to comfort me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's complaint. He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears; He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart. He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death; He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there."

Chris believed on Jesus and is now at home in the Father's house. Believe on Him as did Chris and you will be comforted, you will receive strength, you will receive rest for your hearts and souls. Believe on Jesus who wept, suffered, died, and rose the third day overcoming death and the grave by His death and resurrection for He will wipe away every tear from your eyes, He will walk with you throughout your life, and He raise you up and reunite you with Chris and all the saints of God when He comes again.

Believe Jesus, follow Jesus and, if I may, take up the mantle that Chris wore: do works that will glorify the Lord in heaven as did Chris as one redeemed by Christ the crucified - mentor, coach, lead, teach, befriend, support, encourage, love, fill in the blank _____ for what Chris was to you.

For Chris did all those things and more out of love for Jesus, who prepared a room for him in the Father's house. Chris did all he did because the Lord Jesus made him a great blessing to us all. Believe on Jesus and you will be comforted, you will have strength for the days ahead, and you will see Chris again in glory since Jesus is, for Chris and for all who believe on Him, the Savior of all. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+