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St. Paul's Lutheran Church

2100 16th Street SW

Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels

Sermon preached on

June 22, 2024

Victory message for Lori Skinner

January 6, 1958 -December 17 ,2023

Scripture Lessons: John 14:1-6, John 10:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:4

Hymns: 777, 457

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:24-25

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Who Rose victorious over the grave, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: We are assembled here for a victory service. We are assembled here in the name of Jesus Christ who died for us, and the third day rose triumphant over the grave. It is because of Jesus' triumph over the grave that we are assembled for a victory service for Lori Skinner. We have Lori's remains with us today but that doesn't represent defeat, or the end of Lori's life. Because of Jesus' triumph over the grave, Lori also shall be raised in glory. Paul wrote to the Corinthians *“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in*

victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” ⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.* ⁵⁷ *But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (I Corinthians 15:54-57)

The victory we celebrate for Lori today is the victory which Jesus attained for her, and the victory which became hers by the Holy Spirit calling Lori to faith and preserving her in faith. It is by the Spirit’s grace that Jesus was important in the life of Lori Skinner. Jesus’ conclusion at the end of the Sermon on the Mount are words that are fitting for Lori, fitting for her attitude toward her Savior Jesus Christ and regarding His Word. I believe firmly that by the grace of God, Jesus’ characterization of those who hear His sayings are rightly applied to Lori. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, who called her to faith through the Word, Lori was --

THEME: A Wise Woman Who Built her Life on the Rock.

First, let us learn from Lori’s example.

I. Lori Heard what the Lord Jesus had to Say.

For many years now Lori wasn’t able to attend church services, but that doesn’t reflect on her attitude toward God’s Word. Lori received the Word through mailed sermons, and she stayed in the Scriptures. We had many regular devotions over the past 20 years. Lori heard the Scriptures, of which Paul wrote to Timothy: “*From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*” (1 Timothy 3:15) From childhood Lori knew the Holy Scriptures, and they did make Lori wise for salvation. Whenever I had the opportunity to visit with her, it was a real delight, because Lori was always eager to hear the Word.

All of us who knew and loved Lori understand the different struggles Lori had in life: physical, emotional and spiritual. For Lori to hear the message of God’s love and forgiveness in Christ crucified, that was a message that calmed her troubled conscience, brought peace to her heart and mind, and assured her of God’s love. She knew that the Lord did not deal with her according to her sins but according to His grace in Christ. That assurance that Lori

received through Word and sacrament gave her both peace and joy in the Lord.

Lori trusted her Savior to watch over her and Lori stored His Word of truth in her heart. She loved the Word of God! For Lori “Word of God” was not just a figure of speech. Lori didn’t consider the Bible to be a lot of writings from a lot of different people who just put down whatever they happened to think was appropriate for their circumstances. This mistaken notion is held by so many in the world today so that they can dismiss what they don’t want to hear in God’s Word. Lori knew the Scriptures to be God’s Word. All the Scriptures were the words of her Lord Jesus speaking to her. Lori heard the voice of the Good Shepherd speaking to her, leading her in the paths of righteousness through the Word.

That leads us to understand --

II. Lori and the Obedience of Faith.

Lori trusted Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Just a little more than a week before her death she received Jesus’ body and blood in the sacrament of Holy Communion through which she knew she received the forgiveness of sins, and assurance of everlasting life. That is the foundation of faith upon which Lori relied. It was not on works of righteousness which she had done, but upon the grace of God that Lori built her certainty of peace with God.

Everyone here who knew Lori would quickly characterize her as a loving and caring individual. She cared for people and wanted to let them know it. The love for others that flowed from Lori’s heart isn’t the reason that she possessed eternal life in heaven. She was sure of her salvation because of Jesus’ love for her. Jesus’ love for Lori produced that fruit of love that Lori expressed to others. She wanted others to know Jesus. She wanted you to know Jesus as dearly and closely as Lori knew Jesus.

III. Lori’s Life Foundation was the Rock, Jesus Christ.

Now the passage before us has Jesus reminding us of what that means for one’s life here on earth, *“the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.”*

The storms of life come into all our lives; they certainly came into Lori's life as well. There were many blessings in Lori's life, and she was very thankful to God for those blessings. Among them were the blessings of her family and her friends, and her nephews and nieces whom she loved so dearly. She loved to talk about them and expressed her love for them. Lori also saw those who cared for her in her time of need as special blessings from the Lord, and she loved them for their kindness toward her. Lori saw all these people as special blessings. Yes, Lori did count the blessings in her life.

However, as you all also know so well, there were also many trials and tribulations in Lori's life. The storms of life blew hard in Lori's life, but through them all she did not lose faith. All of us who knew her and cared about her are familiar with the many different physical health challenges Lori faced, and how these challenges impacted her emotional well-being, as they would have for any of us. In those times of struggle Lori turned to the Lord for her comfort and strength, and Lori maintained the confidence that the victory Christ secured for her in His death and resurrection was a victory she possessed for herself through faith in Jesus.

It is in this faith that Lori lived, and in this faith that Lori passed from this life to her eternal home in heaven. She is with the Lord. That remained her prayer, and her heartfelt desire not only for herself, but also for those she loved. This was on her heart. You were on her heart. This was her prayer for you. Today as we gather to celebrate Lori's victory, we would do well to honor her memory by honoring her Savior and ours. Don't just talk about Lori and her love for Jesus as her best Friend and Savior. Follow her example; hear Jesus' sayings, know the truth of God's love and forgiveness in Christ crucified, and build your life on that Rock which is Christ. Then you also shall know the hope of everlasting life that Lori Skinner now enjoys in the presence of her Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Romans15:13)