

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, August 31, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“THE END OF THE SEASON”

READING: I Thessalonians 4:13 – Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 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. 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. 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. After that, we who are still alive and 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. Therefore encourage each other with those words.

The other day my youngest grandson, Uri, and I were cleaning up my vegetable garden. We pulled up the yellow squash vines that were all played out and beyond production. We pulled out some early tomato plants that had given up their fruit and gone brown. We even found a dried-up cucumber vine and discarded it. Then we went through the day lilies and pulled all the dried-up flower stalks whose blossoms had long ago withered away. It always makes me a little sad to pull those remains and toss them out. Not so long ago they were green and blossoming and full of promise. The end of the season has come, and the rest of the peppers, tomatoes, and sunflowers will eventually go that same way. Then I’ll have to weather a whole winter before I can get my hands dirty, plant new seeds, and watch everything growing green and full of life.

Last week two people I loved very much went home to the Lord: Walter Brinkman, Pam Shelton’s dad, and Joyce Timberlake, mother of Chuck Timberlake and Cindy Himburg. Both of them were always good for a big smile and a friendly greeting. Joyce I’ve known and loved for 31 years. Walter came our way only a few years ago, but I felt like I’d known him a long time already. Both of them were faithful children of God who served him in many ways through the years. It made me very sad to have to say good-bye to them, but Joyce was 88 and Walter had just celebrated his 93rd birthday the Saturday before he died. The end of their season had come, and the rest of us will eventually go the same way unless Jesus comes back first. (Come, Lord Jesus!)

I heard a new country song on the radio today. There was a line that said, “...it all goes by so fast.” Yes, it does. Our grandparents, aunts and uncles, then parents, then our friends – they’re all gone much too fast. But St. Paul tells us in the text that we are not to be overly concerned, nor “to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.” These folks whose season has come to an end are not lost to us, not at all! He says we will see them all again, and they will be whole, filled with life, and crowned with joy. When that last trumpet sounds and the archangel yells, “Come out!” we will be reunited with those who have gone before us.

How does St. Paul know this? Because the “Lord himself” has told us by his word. And what makes that word solid and sure? “...Jesus died and rose again...” It is by his death and his resurrection that we have the word of the prophets made solid and the promises of God made sure. Jesus purchased us from death and damnation by his blood, and he has destroyed the power of death over us by his Easter triumph. So when we mourn, we do not mourn the way the world does. They go by wishful thinking, or by incantations, sacrifices, and accumulated good works that avail them nothing. We go by faith in the words, actions, and will of the Living God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So another season is coming to its end. The garden will lie fallow and empty for a time, but spring will come again. A new season will bring new life and new produce. That picture fits the sorrows we face in the death of loved ones, too. Their season has come to its end, but the Lord has promised us a new season will come full of life and reunion and joy. All of that comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) Have a safe and blessed Labor Day.
- 2) Now that Grace-on-Wednesday is in full swing, we can look forward to another new beginning as we look forward to the resumption of Sunday School on September 12 with an Inter-generational Celebration and regular classes on the 19th. There'll be something for everyone. Plan to make it part of your life in Christ.