

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, July 13, 2021
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“HAPPY BIRTHDAY, OLD HICKORY”

READING: I Thessalonians 4:13-18 – 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 are 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 these words.

My father, Bob Kischnick, would have been 92 today. He received his crown on the first of July last year, 12 days shy of his 91st birthday. And, I still miss him. Hardly a week goes by that I don’t think to myself, “I need to call Pa and tell him about this.” Then immediately I have that brief touch of sorrow and am reminded that I can’t do that anymore. If I see a deer, or a rabbit finds its way into my garden, or we get a 2-inch rain, I want to report these things to him. He always enjoyed animal sightings and weather reports, or at least I enjoyed telling him about them. Can’t do that anymore.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord, that we have his word and promise about those who have gone before us. In our lesson today Paul says we are not “to grieve like the rest of men.” Nearly every religion and every culture around this globe have some vague idea of an afterlife and in their funeral rites they allude to these ideas with rituals and incantations. But in every case, it is a ritual bound and held by the finality of death. They are not based on any forensic truth. What I mean is that their “hopes” are wishful and without any real evidence that they will be realized. Not so the Christians! Our hope is founded and anchored in an evidentiary fact: Jesus Christ came alive out of his tomb on Easter Sunday! He was seen, heard, touched, and experienced by scores of eye-witnesses. He defeated death and overcame the grave. And, death has no more power over him, ever!

Consequently, Christians look at death as a temporary state, a time when soul and body are separated and we who are still bound to earth are missing their presence with us. But Paul says we have the “Lord’s own word” on the future. There will come a day when with a “loud command, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trumpet call of God...the dead in Christ will rise first.” I think that loud command will be the same one that summoned Lazarus out of his tomb when Jesus called him, “Come out!” “Come out, Bob!” “Come out, Verna!” “Come out, all my Beloved!”

So when we are missing our grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, children, and friends, Jesus speaks to us a comforting word. He tells us that since himself overcame death and it has no more sting, we can look forward to the day when a blessed reunion in heaven will be given and achieved. Certainly we grieve, but our grief is tempered and assuaged by the knowledge that we will see these again who had their hopes firmly laid in the hands of Jesus.

Dad’s nickname amongst his friends was “Old Hickory”. I’m not sure just how that label came to him. I think it had something to do with how tough he was in his younger years and how strong a man he was. Of course we always teased him that he was called that because of how hard-headed he was! But I was always pleased and proud when one of Dad’s buddies would approach him and greet him with, “Hey, Hickory! How

y'a doin?" I look forward to the day when I see him again. And, that moment will be made possible by the blood and the resurrection of our Savior Jesus. So, Happy Birthday, Old Hickory!

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

- 1) I'll be on vacation through the 19th. Pastor David Dehnke will lead my Thursday Saints Bible class this week. I thank him for that!
- 2) Pastor Woods and Trish will make a trip to Alaska the last week of this month and the first week of August. Keep them in your prayers.