

Funeral of Mary Lorie Swander – Readings and Meditation – 9.11.2020

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hymn

"The Lord's My Shepherd"

ELW #778

John 20:11-18:

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Grace and peace to you from God, the Creator, and from our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Mary Lorie Swander channeled Mary Magdalene her whole life. Oh, she wouldn't have described herself that way, but if ever there was another Mary who began as the salt of the earth and used that saltiness to spice up the world around her, it was Mary Lorie. Of course, you all might not have made that connection, especially if you'd heard about the confusion about her name that surrounded her most of her life. For from birth through her first 3 weeks, she had no name. Then brother Bruce called her Mary. Her sister's family knew her as her Auntie Ree, while her brother's family always called her Aunt La-Ree. Then, much to the whole family's surprise, when she moved to Olathe, she introduced herself as Mary. A woman of many names, but only one that matters now, "child of God," for Mary was the essence of the proud Marys of the Bible – always announcing to the world that she had seen the Lord - and everything she did confirmed, that was the God's honest truth.

It is hard to try to sum up such a life of living faith, hard to totally "capture" her many ways of being throughout her amazing life's work. She was a homemaker, and by that I mean the very best use of that term. She was in the business of making "home" for her loved ones, her friends, and often an extended community that she hardly knew, but soon became part of her home. She was a great cook and hostess, and she and Dean entertained at lake homes in Oklahoma and Arkansas. There were always BBQ ribs and baked beans to welcome guests, and no matter who you were, she made you feel welcome. With Mary, you were always at home.

If Mary were to have taken a "gifts inventory" that some organizations are fond of using, she would have scored an A++ (and more!) in the area they call "Woo" for the gift of hospitality. Mary *knew* how to "woo" folks and pull them in to her home, her family, and her heart.

Folks were drawn to her in the joy of good times shared around many tables. She celebrated every life passage for everyone she knew. She gathered children together for sleepovers and marked perfect attendance, scouting events and too many recitals and games to count over the years. She created wonderful cross stitch and embroidery. And she "salted" her daughter Carol, a preschool teacher, with the knowledge of sharing it all as a labor of love. She baked and crafted and prayed and studied the Bible and sang hymns and *listened*.

It might have been the listening that also made her such a "non-anxious presence" in the midst of hard times. When someone was sick, or in the hospital, Mary served as the family Chaplain (and that gift she passed along to daughter Joan, a pastor.) In caring for folks in those kind of fearful and trying times, Mary shared God's love with relatives as they went home to be with Jesus. She was there for them, and death did not frighten her. She often said she loved life and having her beloveds all around her, but at the same time she said that when it was her time, her "bags were packed and ready."

And now that she has reached her eternal home, she knows the ultimate truth of Resurrection. She knows, because even now as she is reunited with family and her beloved husband, Dean, Jesus is saying to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* And I am very sure that Mary Lorie faithfully responds, as always, *"Yes, Lord, you know I do."*

Mary knew how to live – quietly, peaceably, with joy and great love. And in her last days and moments, she knew how to leave us. Quietly, peacefully, with joyful gratitude and great love – holding a cross to her heart.

Finally, Mary loved the story of the gospel hymn *“In the Garden,”* which Richard is going to play for us in a moment. Most of us think that the story is about Jesus walking with us in the Garden, but Joan told me a few days ago that it was actually written to illustrate the story of the encounter between Jesus and Mary Magdalene outside the empty tomb that we heard earlier. That encounter changed her life, and our own Mary Lorie’s as well. So much so, that the hymn became her very favorite, and her encounter with Christ inspired her lifelong, living faith. Just like Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, our Mary’s life also proclaimed, “I have seen the Lord” with every day, in every way.

Well done, good and faithful servant. We will see you again, in our Father’s house.
Amen.

Richard A. Howell continued with “In the Garden” on the piano

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