

Funeral Message for our dear, beloved brother, Dave Long.

October 30, 1940 – February 16, 2024

Dave Long went home to be with the Lord at age 83. Dave was a faithful member of Northland Bible Church, Tomahawk, Wisconsin. He was the founder and manager of our church's website (northlandbiblechurch.com). Dave's medical condition did not allow him to attend services. But he labored constantly, from his home, to promote the life and ministry of our church. The propagation of the Gospel, the salvation of the lost, and the edification of the saints were his constant, abiding passion and work. Dave's home was a haven for many. He tirelessly found various ways to communicate on the internet and also by phone. He is treasure laid up in heaven. His labors, which were not in vain, will be missed by us (I Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 6:10).

"It is Well"

Scripture Reading: II Kings 4:8-37

In the book of II Kings, the fourth chapter, we have some interesting stories about the prophet Elisha. In our Scripture reading, we just read about a prominent woman, whose name is never mentioned. She befriended the prophet by feeding him and providing a place for him to sleep. The woman was childless. So, God blessed the woman by giving her a son. Some years later the little boy suddenly complained of pain in his head and soon died. The woman went to see the prophet. She was greeted with the words, *"Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?"* And she answered, ***"It is well."*** The word translated "well" is *"Shalom"* – meaning *"Peace / Prosperity."* It was often used as a greeting.

We want to talk a moment about death and grieving. Death is a part of life, but it often seems like it cheats us / robs us. To honor this woman's faith, we need to understand her grief when her son died. This son was a wonderful gift from God – a gift that she had not even asked for. She had been childless and felt a certain reproach and emptiness because of that. She loved God and sincerely ministered to the prophet Elisha over a long time, providing him and his assistant a place to stay when they were travelling in the area. She was not seeking a reward, but Elisha told her that God was going to give her a son. This was more than she could ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). So, this special, only child was precious to her. Let's look at this story a little more carefully.

The child suddenly became ill one day and died, without the father knowing. The mother told her husband that she wanted to see the prophet, but did not say why. She didn't want to alarm her husband. She wanted to see what the prophet would do. So, when her husband asked why she had to go see the prophet, she simply said, "It will be well." (vs. 23 - *Everything is in God's hands.*) When Elisha saw her coming, he inquired, if it was well with her, her husband, her son. She said, "*it is well*" (*All is at peace.*) And yet something was going on. Elisha noted that her soul was vexed ("*bitter / grieved*") about something. She had sorrow, but she also had faith. She was seeking the Lord's help. This reminds us of the Apostle Paul's words in I Thessalonians 4:13-18. (vs. 13)

The story goes on to show how the prophet Elisha went to the son's dead body and brought him back to life. But our point today is to observe the faith of the woman who, grieving over the death of her son, was able to give a remarkable statement that all was well / all was at peace. She had a perspective about God; about life; about death that kept the important things in view. She had an urgency to get to Elisha and to have the help and counsel of the Lord, but her bright outlook on life would not be destroyed by this sudden loss.

How could she say, "*It is well*"?

- She had a family. Only by the grace of God she had been able to have a baby.
- Though he did not live long, she experienced love and joy with him in the home.
- Now, that son was in the hands of God
- She would one day see him again, when **she** also passed on into God's hands.
- Her son was now a treasure, laid up for her at a later time.
- King David had lost a child. His faithful words comfort us, "**...I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me...**" (II Samuel 12:23). What a surprise for the Shunammite woman!

Today, through the Gospel of Christ and the revelation of the New Testament, we know more about death and eternity than that faithful woman did over 2500 years ago.

Jesus said, "**I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die...**" (John 11:25-26).

Death means "separation." When a person dies, their spirit and soul are separated from their body. But the more important thing is called "the second death" – when a person's spirit and soul are separated from God forever. Jesus is telling us that when a person leaves this life, if they have believed and trusted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, they will immediately be in the

presence of the Lord and never be separated from Him. Or, as the apostle Paul says it, “...**absent** (“away”) **from the body [is] to be present** (“at home”) **with the Lord.**” (II Corinthians 5:8).

But Jesus also warned unbelievers, “...*I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: where I go, you cannot come...you shall die in your sins; for if you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins.*” (John 8:21, 24). Jesus said that we must “...*believe...that I am he...*” (I John 5:4-5) or we will experience the second death. What does that mean?

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God ... He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.”

(John 3:16-18, 36)

“Truly, truly I say unto you, he that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

(John 5:24)

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me.”

(John 14:1-3,6)

So, Is it well with you?

Have you put your faith in the Son of God; the Christ (Messiah = “anointed one”)? He is the One – The Only One, that the Father sent to be the Savior of the world (I John 4:14). No normal man can pay for their own sins, or the sins of anyone else. No normal man can change their own heart and make things right. No normal man can change the hearts of anyone else. God himself had to become a man and dwell with us – not just setting an example of good living, but living a worthy, sinless life that could be offered as a sacrifice - a substitute payment for our sinful lives.

The resurrected Christ now provides forgiveness and a new life. We call it the new birth – when Jesus comes to live within the person who receives him as Lord and Savior (John 3:3; Colossians 1:27; II Corinthians 5:17).

“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29).

Today, things are well with Dave Long. Is it well with you? Dave wanted everyone to hear this, so that things would be well with their souls, too.

“It Is Well with My Soul”

The Hymn

Our opening story, in the book of II Kings, was the inspiration for a very special hymn – “It is well with my soul” – written by Horatio Spafford. This hymn was not just inspired by a knowledge of the Bible, but also by many tragic events which took place in the Spafford family. In the 1800’s, Horatio Spafford was a Christian who was active in ministry. He had a wife, a son and four daughters. He also was an attorney and had invested heavily in real-estate in the Chicago area. Their four-year-old son died of scarlet fever. Then, one year later, the great Chicago fire (1871) killed nearly 300 people and made around 90,000 others homeless (1/3 of Chicago’s residents). 17,500 buildings and 73 miles of streets were destroyed. Though most of Spafford’s business holdings were destroyed, He did all that he could to give relief to others.

Two years later there was an opportunity to do some ministry in Europe with D. L. Moody & Ira Sankey. Horatio sent his wife and daughters on an ocean voyage, ahead of time, for some relaxation. Horatio remained to handle some business and would join them later. On the voyage, there was a collision of ships. The ship, on which the Spafford family was riding, sank in 12 minutes. All four daughters were drowned. Mrs. Spafford sent a cable message which included the words, “Saved Alone.” As Horatio sailed to meet his wife, he was notified at the moment he

was passing over the place of the shipwreck. It is there that he began to form the words for this beloved hymn, “It is Well with my soul.”

The Spaffords went on to establish an orphanage in Jerusalem. They did much in an effort to help Jews, Christians and Muslims to live in peace. I wish I could tell you that the Spaffords had smooth sailing after that. The truth is that they suffered other tragedies, including the death of another son that was born to them. Even the man who wrote the tune for this song suffered. The minister and hymn-writer, Philip Bliss was the first person to publicly sing this song. One month later, he and his wife were both killed in a terrible train accident.

Did God not love these people? Were their faith and labors all in vain? Am I just trying to scare you? No – rather, I am just trying to prepare you. Along with joys and pleasures, suffering and death are a part of life. Life is something you don’t want to do without Christ. You certainly don’t want to die without Him! It is our desire that today, you will be able to say, “***For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.***” (Philippians 1:21 cp. I Corinthians 15:51-58)

It is Well with My Soul

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.
 - o *Refrain:*
It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.
2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.
3. My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

4. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

These are the four original verses. Later a fifth verse was written:

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!