Ellen Leppelmeier Funeral

Sarah, Brian, Katelyn, Claire, nephews, nieces, and all friends and family of Ellen, Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be multiplied unto you this day. Amen.

The curse of death is not good. It is the opposite of God's intention for mankind. God Himself is life, we believe, and He came to give us life abundantly. The beauty of His promises, of the prayers and hymns drawn from those promises, and the glimpses of life we have to treasure on this side of heaven all stand, as magnificent as they are, in the shadow of death. And that, friends, is the beauty and power of our God.

Death in all of its ugliness is undone by life. Death in all of its seeming power has been swallowed up and turned into the slave of our God.

All will die, except for those found alive at the final coming of Christ. All will die. Ellen has died. She died because of her sin. She died because of the sin she committed, yes. But, it was the deeper sin at work in her flesh that killed her. What was a curse, this deep, fleshly sin all of us inherited from our parents, God has, however, by His great love and compassion for us, turned into our good. "The hour is coming," our Savior says, "and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live."

Ellen heard this voice and knew this voice well. Her faith, faith like a child, was given to her by her savior's loving words. She was rebuked, she was chastised by the one who loved and and desired to save her; the same way our Lord Jesus Christ rebukes and chastises us! But with that rebuke came the Words of Promise - the words promising and guaranteeing our salvation.

Ellen's body was baptized with the washing of water and the word. Her body and her soul were marked as one redeemed by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Her future, now sealed by Christ's blood, is the same as her Savior's because she was and is united to Christ in Holy Baptism.

Yet she died.

Dear friends, the death of a Christian is a blessed thing. As the Psalmist declares, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints!" The same body that received the promise of eternal life is the same body that must be purified. This is the fallen flesh that is finally done away with in death.

> *As St. Paul says (Rom. 8:10), "your body is dead because of sin"; that is, it is being killed because of the sin still present in and remaining in the flesh. Death itself serves this purpose: to destroy sinful flesh so that we may rise completely renewed. In the death of a believer even now, once his or her faith has overcome [death's] terrors, there is no longer that sting and sense of wrath of which Paul says (1 Cor. 15:56), "the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law."*[1]

While we certainly do not rejoice in death we do rejoice in the victory of Christ over death. We rejoice that Ellen, who believed and confessed Christ, was not given over to terrors in death but confidence in the faithfulness of Christ to use death to bring her to Him. Ellen now awaits the resurrection of the body at the end of time wherein all believers will be resurrected with perfect,

1 AP XII, 153.

sinless bodies and enjoy real life - free from death. There is no wrath or sting in the death of a Christian and "without this sense of wrath death is no punishment at all."[2]

It is, therefore, given to us, Christian brothers and sisters, to sorrow *as those who have hope* and to grieve *as those who have confidence*. If you turn away from death in fear, shame, or sorrow, you are turning away from the ultimate picture of Christ's victory in the life of His Christians! Paul exhorts the Christian, "comfort one another with these words!" What words are these?

That at the last day, the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven and raise the dead who died in Him and bring up those who are alive on earth at that time; that the body we place in the ground, marked by baptism, united to Christ, redeemed by His blood - though it was sown in corruption - will be raised perfect and - though it was sown mortal - will be raised immortal.

These are the promises the Christian has in death - faith in these remove the sting of death. Trust in Christ removes fear of death. Let us give thanks that Ellen was given such faith and that her Savior triumphed over her death. Christ has made death for her a portal from life to life! Thanks be to God. Amen.

October 24, 2026

Job 19:23-27; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; John 5:24-30

2 AP XII, 153.