

Memorial Service for the Miscarried

Lord's Day, January 22nd, 2006

Prelude

Processional

Readings:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' (John 11:25).

"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. 19:14).

*"He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry them in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young." (Isa. 40:11).*

Sing Hymn #549 - By the Sea of Crystal

The Consolation of God's Word

Read Psalm 23 responsively

Pastor: *The Lord is my shepherd*

Congregation: **I shall not want**

He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters, He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; for you are with me;

Your rod and Your staff

They comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD

Forever.

Sing Hymn #347 - The Church's One Foundation

Old Testament Reading - Psalm 121
This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Sing Hymn #131 - Children of the Heavenly Father

New Testament Reading - 18:1-5, 10
This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Sing Hymn #192 - I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

Homily - The Promise of His Presence (Psalm 139:7-18)

The Promise of His Presence
Psalm 139:7-18

Introduction

In times of grief and loss we Christians cling to hope. As the Apostle Paul declares in 1 Thes. 4:13 *"we do not grieve as those who have no hope"*. Our hope is nourished by God's promises. Our hope is no vain, imaginary wish, it is rooted and grounded in God's gracious Word. As we remember with sorrow the loss of our unborn children, our souls call out for hope; hope that they are not truly lost to us; hope that they are in Christ's presence even now; hope that death cannot separate us from them; and hope that in the Resurrection they as well as we will rise to new and eternal life. Before us in this wonderful Psalm, David gives us food for such hope.

The Psalmist here revels in the fact that God is ever present with him, not only in the challenges of adult life but even in the days when he was formed in his mother's womb. God's knowledge of and presence with David as an unborn infant casts illumination upon the state of our young ones who were lost in pregnancy. What was true for David is presented to us as a promise for our children, even those we were never able to meet in this life. This illumination is calculated to ease our grief and sooth our sorrow.

The Inescapability of God's Presence

Last Lord's Day I spoke to you from the first 6 verses of this Psalm. Those verses were focused upon the knowledge of God. David rejoiced in the fact that God knew him perfectly. But this afternoon I want to spend a few minutes reflecting upon the omnipresence of Yahweh (i.e. the truth that God is present everywhere). But again, as I said concerning David's view of God's knowledge, so here I say it about David's view of God's presence: God knows his own people in a special way and here, God is specially present with all those who are in covenant with him. Briefly

stated, though God is present everywhere at all times, He is present with his chosen people in a far more personal way. That is the presence the David is here speaking of. And that is the presence that I wish to speak to you about.

The best way I know to give you comfort at times like this is to remind you of the fact that God is always present with you, His chosen people. David makes it apparent that God's presence is not limited by space or time or anything else in creation. Neither distance nor darkness can Him from his people. Like David, none of you can escape the loving, gracious presence of the Triune God.

God's Intimacy with the Unborn

And in this Psalm David insists that God's presence extends to infants in the womb. It has been said, and I have said it myself, that the Bible nowhere specifically answers the question about the state of children dying in infancy; that all we may do is argue from God's mercy that He will act mercifully toward those who never saw the light of day. Well, as I reflect upon this passage I begin to wonder if there isn't something more here.

The Bible uses the categories of knowing and being present in covenantal terms. David isn't talking about God's omniscience and God's omnipresence in the abstract. David is concerned about God knowing him and God being present with him. And here is where the covenant comes in. The fundamental promise of the covenant is nearness with God; that God will be God to His people and that He will be with them. Remember that sin drove a wedge of separation between God and man but God graciously bridges that gap in the covenant. God came near to his people in the glory cloud. He came near by dwelling among them in the Temple. But even more than that David asserts that God is always near, always present with, always there to protect, bless, and deliver his covenant people.

If I'm reading this passage with the right eyes that means that covenant infants in the womb are as much favored with God's special presence as are covenant adults. I leave aside the question of the state of infants of unbelievers dying in infancy, though I confess a strong suspicion that those children lost in miscarriage and even those aborted are redeemed in Christ. I find in this text a compelling case for the salvation of believer's children. God is with us all our days, even from the day of our conception. And if He is present with us covenantally in the womb, He will surely be present with us after death.

Therefore in the case of our children, lost to us by miscarriage, we may truly cling in hope to the words of this Psalm. God knew our children before they were born. God was present with them as they developed for He was the One knitting them together in the womb. And God did not abandon them at death. Furthermore, He is present with them now and they with Him in

glory. Finally, at the resurrection He will raise up their bodies along with ours and we will be properly reunited forever.

When We Awake...

The loss of children is a dark night for the souls of parents. We grieve the shattering of hopes and dreams, we suffer the loss of fellowship. For the kind of fellowship that exists between a parent and child is among the sweetest gifts this life can grant. But with the Psalmist we cling to hope that God is with us through such trials and that He was and remains with our children.

Conclusion

As we memorialize our lost children we remember by faith that they were never truly lost, for our gracious Triune God has always been present with them. Why they were taken from us remains a secret and mysterious thing that we cannot know. But this you and I may know, rather we must know it. Our God is present with His people at all times to watch over, to provide, and to save. And David has assured us that that presence is very much active even as we grow in our mothers' wombs.

The loss of miscarriage is ripe with grief and sorrow. But this grief, this sorrow is only for a moment. The dark night of death will one day be broken by the dawn of Resurrection. In that day the darkness of death will melt away into the everlasting daylight of life. We will slough off this mortal coil and we and our children will put on new bodies, likened unto Christ's. Then we will know and be known. We will taste the gracious presence of Yahweh in truth. Then we will rejoice in reconciliation with those who are now parted from us by death, including our infant children. In this life we sleep in fits and starts, our dreams are troubled, we see but dimly. But when we awake, Christ will still be with us. In that hope grieve and wait the consumation. Amen.

Prayers and Supplications

Minister: *The Lord be with you*

Congregation: **And with thy spirit.**

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen!

Pastoral prayers

O MERCIFUL Father, whose face the angels of Your little ones do always behold in heaven; Grant us steadfastly to believe that these Your children have been taken into the safe keeping of Your eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALMIGHTY and merciful Father, who grants to children an abundant entrance into Your kingdom; Grant us grace so to conform our lives to their simple and confident faith, that at length, united with them, we may stand in Your presence in fullness of joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

We Entrust our Children to God

Naming and Committing of the unborn to Christ

Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (John 16:22)

IN sure and certain hope of the Resurrection of the body unto eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commit the bodies of these children to the ground and in the meantime we entrust their souls to His holy presence.

Brandon Matthew Harlow - caught up into glory in April, 1985

Taph Enoch Heartsill - made incorruptible on August 5, 1993

Corum Deo Gunsaulus - embraced by Jesus on July 9, 2002

Gabriel Hope Roorda - clothed in immortality on September 30, 2001

Noah Wayne Roorda - entered into glory on January 15, 2002

Aletheia Joy Roorda - lost to us but found with Christ on Oct. 20, 2002

Angelica Hope Emmanuelle Wittenberg

Baby Wittenberg

The LORD bless them and keep them, the LORD make his face to shine upon them and be gracious unto them, the LORD lift up his countenance upon them, and give them peace, both now and evermore.

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:15-17).

Let us pray -

O GOD, whose most dear Son took little children into his arms and blessed them; Give us grace, we ask, to entrust the soul of these children to Your never failing care and love, and bring us all to Your heavenly kingdom; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALMIGHTY God, Father of mercies and giver of all comfort; Deal graciously, we pray, with all those who mourn, that, casting every care on You, they may know the consolation of Your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MAY Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, bless you and keep you, now and for evermore. Amen.

Sing Hymn #539 - Jerusalem the Golden

Postlude