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TREASURES IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:19-21; Floriene Nolte Funeral; May 24, 2019

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares two types of treasures: treasures on earth and treasures in heaven. He warns us that treasures on earth are temporary and will be lost, but that treasures in heaven will last for all eternity. Jesus warns us not to set our hearts on the earthly and temporary but on the heavenly and eternal. He says, **“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

Written in ink in her own hand on the inside front cover of her personal Bible, Floriene wrote Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34 (our Gospel Reading for today from the Sermon on the Mount) and Philippians 4:4-9, 12-13 (our Epistle). Chris brought that Bible for me to see. What I found was that she put marks and notes in it all over the place – evidently from her own personal Scripture reading or from various Bible studies she attended or even led. It was a well-used Bible; the zipper closure has come loose and the binding is broken from a collection of personal notes and papers kept in the back.

There are different ways we show that something is treasured by us. One way is to put it on display, protected, untouched and in pristine condition. Another is to use something until it is beyond worn out, keeping and using it for as long as we have it. That second way is how Floriene showed she treasured God’s Word, by hearing and learning it throughout her life. It was a treasure she did not want to keep for herself, but a treasure to be shared with her children, the children of her congregation as she taught them in Sunday school, and with Vern and the Normans as adult leaders of the high school SPIRIT youth group.

This raises the obvious question: Why did Floriene treasure God’s Word the way she did? The obvious answer to that it contained the heavenly treasure of her salvation in Jesus Christ. What she treasured on earth in her life, a treasure she had in common with Vern, her children, and her church, is as treasure that will last for all eternity. We sang of this Treasure as we entered the church today. “Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!” Floriene treasured her Savior and the salvation He won for her.

We would do a disfavor to her today if we only talked about her faith in Jesus and not who her faith was in. Jesus was her Beautiful Savior, but what does that mean? Jesus' beauty is not like a treasured item we place on a shelf somewhere and keep unused and in pristine condition. Jesus is a Beautiful Savior in His ugly, beaten and disfigured body as it hung on the cross to forgive and save us from our sins. Even in His gloriously risen body on Easter, Jesus was able to show to His disciples the marks of the nails and spear of His suffering and death for them. When John was given his revelation of heaven, he saw Jesus, the Son of God, in His glory still as the **Lamb who was slain** (5:6, 9, 12), "whose blood set us from to be people of God."

Floriene's Beautiful Savior came to her regularly in His Word, and in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper to give His true body and blood to her to eat and drink for the forgiveness of her sins. For most of her life that was right here in church. For many years she also helped out at the Methodist Home on the fourth and fifth Fridays of the month when one her pastors led the service and gave the Lord's Supper to her fellow members and those of other Missouri Synod congregations. She was one of a group of dear ladies of our congregation – whose average age just happens to over most all of those they help at those services – to make sure those "old people" could hear God's Word and receive the Sacrament of Jesus' body and blood. The Sunday before she died, Floriene was able to attend church and receive the Lord's Supper in Iowa. Jesus was her Beautiful Savior, her Priceless Treasure throughout her life. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Later this afternoon, Floriene's remains will be laid to rest next to her dear husband. When we first moved to Fairmont they were our neighbors three doors down on Homewood Drive. She used to talk about the kids in the neighborhood when Chris and Bob were growing up, and took a special interest especially in our son, Sasha, who was eight years old when we moved in. She watched as he grew up into a young man and always asked about how he was doing, now that he is off to college.

Floriene wasn't a woman to brag, but she liked to remind people of her long marriage to Vern, especially in light of the opposition they

experienced to marrying each other. It's not exactly like he robbed the cradle; she was 21 when they got married. Yes, there was the ten year difference in their age, but why were family members opposed to them marrying? In talking to Chris and Bob, it seems like age might not have been the main issue. There seems to have been older, single females relatives of Floriene that had their eye on the dashing war hero and young man rising in his profession. Take a look at their wedding picture. Vernon was a catch, and Floriene was the one who caught him, to the disappointment of others it seems. The look on Vernon's face shows no disappointment on his part.

Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: **Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.** Jesus goes on to teach that we shouldn't be anxious about our life, what we should eat or drink, or the clothes we wear, because God will take care of us. Our heavenly Father knows we need these things. Jesus reminds us **to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to [us].**

In these words about us and our life in Christ is the reminder of who we are to God. The reason we are to lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven is because that is where God wants to take us one day. What God is instructing us to do in faith in Him, is exactly what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We are God's treasure, which He will lay up in heaven. Luther's Small Catechism on the Apostles Creed reminds us that God in Christ has "purchased and won [us] from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death; that [we] may be His own." The high price of our redemption was the suffering and death of God's own Son on the cross.

Floriene's pastor chose a Confirmation verse for her to remind her of this. **You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body,** 1 Corinthians 6:20. She confessed that as her faith throughout her life, and she glorified God in her body. Now we wait in faith for God to keep His promise to her, and to us, that He will glorify her in her body by raising it from the dead, like Jesus was raised from the dead. God lays up for Himself treasures in heaven forever. Amen.