

GOD'S EULOGY OF BEV

Numbers 6:22-27; Beverly Oltman Funeral; September 15, 2020

“A eulogy is not in the best Christian tradition.” (*LSB Agenda*, page 117)

It's common to hear eulogies around the time of a death. The term “eulogy” comes from a Greek word that means “speak well of, praise, or extol.” It's literally a “good word” spoken about someone or something. So at the occasion of someone's death it right to remember and tell stories about that person, the good she did for others and the good received. And so when Bev died, it brought to mind fond memories of her.

I was reminded of the Pfeffernüsse cookies that Bev was famous for. Every Christmas we could expect a small package of the hard anise cookies she baked in her kitchen. Apparently Bev kept a record of how many she baked each year and it typically was more than a thousand. With all those she gave away it had to be big number, each one lovingly made. So it is appropriate for us today to eulogize Bev for the many good things she will be remembered for.

Though the Greek word that comes to us as “eulogy” is very rarely used in the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, in the sense of “praise” of someone. The word is most commonly used in the sense of calling down God's gracious power to bless His people or consecrate something for a holy purpose. A good example of this is found in what is called the “Aaronic Benediction” which comes at the close of many of our worship services including funeral services.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless [eulogize] the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

**The LORD bless [eulogize] you and keep you;
the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.**

“So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless [eulogize] them.”

Just like we might sign our name to something claiming it as our own, God puts His name on us with the purpose of blessing us.

In this sense, God's "eulogy" of Bev was to bless her with His name at her Baptism. Already in the Old Testament we are given hints of what would be more fully revealed about God in the New Testament. God had revealed Himself to the children of Israel as the one, true God, and His name He revealed as Yahweh, which is typically translated as **LORD** and printed in all caps in our English Bibles. The One **LORD** and God shows us that there is a "three-ness" about Him as He blesses us using His name, the **LORD**, three times. **The LORD bless you... the LORD make His face to shine upon you... the LORD lift up His countenance upon you.**

What was partially hidden in the days of Moses God revealed fully in His Son Jesus. The One God is three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this God blessed Bev at her Baptism when He placed His name on her, claiming her as His own child forever. On March 18, 1928 the Pastor of Our Savior's, Ceylon, spoke as he poured water on her head, "Beverly Jean, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." She was now a part of God's family.

Bev was born into God's family much like she was born of her parents. And when she married Gordy, together they started a new family. They had the joys of raising Steven and Carol, as well as the sorrow of losing an infant son, Mark. In the sorrow of death that separates us from our loved ones, we can only confess with Job our faith in our gracious God. **The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD** (1:21). You see, we "eulogize" God, calling upon His name to save us from these losses through His Son Jesus Christ. We can bless/eulogize the name of the Lord because He is gracious and merciful to us, abounding in steadfast love.

For as long as they were able, I remember Bev and Gordy sitting right there at the Saturday evening Service. As walking became more difficult, being able to park by the side door and make the shorter walk to the front of the church was the way to go for them. If I were to praise and eulogize her, I could say that she did not let physical difficulties keep her from being in the Lord's house. As long as they were able, they were here to be blessed by God.

And when they were not, they made it their practice to attend the Friday Lutheran service at the Methodist home, until that we cancelled due to COVID. The last time I saw them it was for what is euphemistically called a “window” visit outside Woodland Manner. Their room phone was not working so they borrowed the chaplain’s cell, which he put on speaker while I stood outside their closed window and tried to converse with them, which was difficult. This virus is an evil thing, keeping family members apart and pastors from visiting in person their members.

But at that window, God had a eulogy for Bev and Gordy. The Word of Jesus blessed some bread and wine I had outside the window, which I was able then to pass to the chaplain through a different door, and he was able to bring it to their room give it to them. Jesus’ Word blessed, consecrated, set apart that bread and wine, to give them His body and blood. In their sin, it brought forgiveness. In their frailty, it brought the promise of the resurrection to have glorious bodies.

At the end of a Communion Service, or a funeral service, the tradition of the Church is to use the Aaronic Benediction. **The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.**

That is God’s eulogy of Bev and us. He has placed His name on us to bless us and keep us. God brought Bev to faith in Holy Baptism and kept her in the faith these many years through the hearing of His holy Word and receiving of the Sacrament of His body and blood. God’s face shone His grace upon her throughout her life. In the darkness of this life, she could always live in God’s light, and now she dwells with the Lord where there is no darkness and only light. God’s “countenance” or face lit up in joy as He received her into her heavenly home. Her struggles in this life are over and she is dwelling in God’s peace until Jesus returns to raise the dead.

That is God’s eulogy of Bev. It’s not Him praising her, saying nice things about her, but God blessing her with His own name and saving her by that name. May God keep us in the true faith and receive His blessing now and forever. Amen.