

Reading Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

⁵ a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

⁷ a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

Reading Romans 8:35-39

³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶

³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eulogy

Dear friends, we are united today in sorrow at the death of Doris Hockensmith. As full and as beautiful as a life could be, hers was, and yet there is never a good time for us to say goodbye. The reality of death, with all its pain and sense of loss, confronts us at this moment. Still, though we are united in sorrow, we are also united by something else... our faith. Confronted with the reality of death, we are just as surely confronted with the reality of our faith. Our faith, Doris' faith is not a "maybe" or "I hope so" faith – not fantasy or wishful thinking, but a reality. Our faith and her faith is a light that shines and gives us a clearer picture of life, death, and resurrection. Our faith and her

faith tells us that for Doris, the story has certainly not ended this week, but only begun a new chapter.

If I could say nothing else about Doris, I would tell you that she was a woman of great faith. She and Jim moved several times since they were married in '61, but since settling here in Alexandria they've been long term members at First Pres. Together with their daughters Kathy, Karla, Kim, and Kristie, Doris left her mark on this church. She was active in all sorts of ways: she sang in the choir, she taught Sunday School. She had a special class of 3 boys who started out with her at the elementary level, and wouldn't let her graduate them unless she came with them... so she did. Jim remembers how they always wanted to take her out for lunch on her birthday, but she'd never let them pay. She turned it around and treated them every time. That's just one simple indicator of who Doris was. She was giving and generous in everything, never believing that her blessings were meant to be kept to herself. She was truly dedicated to this church in every way.

Now, of course she loved her family just like she loved her church. She was working at Sears Roebuck when she met Jim in the late 50s, and enjoyed her job at St. Francis Cabrini after the girls went to college, but for the years they were at home she dedicated herself full-time to the job of wife and mother. Her four daughters remember her toughness and reliability – though the family moved all over the place (Kansas, Missouri, Texas, New Mexico, and finally Louisiana) Doris was the rock and the consistency they needed. She was there for them as they adapted to new neighborhoods and new schools. She supported them with her involvement in Girl Scouts. She herself was so outgoing, such a people person. Doris made friends and connections naturally, wherever she went – she had the gift of being able to rise to meet the circumstances.

Speaking of rising: you may or may not have known about Doris' great skill in the kitchen, particularly in her baking! She loved creating cakes and cookies and treats of all kinds. The girls fondly remember Winnie the Pooh birthday cakes from her special mold. Doris even provided Kathy's wedding cake – baked and decorated it herself, and then drove it about 300 miles to the wedding without a hitch! Just another of the many ways you saw her dedication to her family. Doris was always trying to do something special for the people she loved. She knew what a gift this life is. In her lively, open, and upbeat personality you saw the perfect yin to Jim's quiet, thoughtful, sometimes reserved yang. They may not have been cut from the same cloth exactly, but

they made a wonderful match. Doris was always proud of her husband and her daughters. She was profoundly thankful for the many ways she knew God had blessed her family. And she was so clearly a blessing to them. I think there's no higher praise that could be given to Doris than what Jim said to me about her this week: "She was the best thing that God ever did for me. I don't know where my life would have been without her."

Jim asked that in her memorial service that we read the 23rd Psalm together, which we will do a bit later. These are some of the most familiar verses in Scripture, so much so that even people who are not religious usually recognize the words. They are among the most comforting in the Bible, often being quoted in times of trouble or distress, and frequently shared at a funeral. But I think perhaps for Doris their imagery contained some special meaning.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

It would be so wonderful if God would simply promise to us that we would never go through difficult times. But we do go through great challenges; Scripture is honest with us about the trials we will face. And it reminds us that the Lord protects, guides, and supports us. He does not send us through the dark valley with an empty promise to meet us again on the other side. He goes with us every step of the way. In her later years, as she dealt with health issues and Alzheimer's Doris could certainly have talked about how she had been through the "valley of the shadow of death." But because of the life she lived, the faith she held, she did not walk alone. In everything, God walked with her. Her husband, her daughters walked with her.

I think Doris knew what it was like to be shepherded and guided by her Lord through the difficult times. I think she also knew how to place that gentle, shepherding hand on others. I think she would tell you today that God is always there to comfort us and sustain us. "As I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for your rod and your staff comfort me." And in the midst of it I know she would still hold on to the final verse of the 23rd Psalm: "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The end of our journey through life on earth is to be with God forever, as Doris well knew. Many people think that the story of human life is, "Birth, life, and death." For Doris, death does not have the last word; life does. The story is not "Birth, life, and death," but rather, "Life, death, and Resurrection." Death is not final; death does not win. The end of the story is Resurrection and life

everlasting. And so the farewell that we give to Doris today is a temporary farewell; the burial we give Doris is a temporary burial. She will live. She will rise. Doris belonged to her Lord Jesus in baptism. She lived in Him by a life of prayer, obedience to His teachings, and faithfulness to His Church. As we think of her today and in the future, we can say with faith, “Doris, you do not belong to death. You belong to Christ.” She, who has lived in Christ and died in Christ, will surely rise in Christ.

In the love that she showed to each of us, in her dedication to her family, her church, and her Lord, Doris showed us what it means to live in Christ. Surely even now she hears Christ’s affirmation: “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the rest prepared for you.” Friends, as we are gathered here to mourn the loss of Doris, we need not mourn as those who have no hope. Because of our faith in the resurrection, this time is a time for joy and thanksgiving, a time for us to remember all of the ways in which she impacted our lives, and to cherish the memories we hold of her. Today, she has gone on ahead of us, but there will come a day when in God’s grace we will meet again. Until that time, we need not fear the power or the emptiness of death, as we know both Doris and we ourselves are held in the loving arms of Christ.