



St John Lutheran Church

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In Memoriam + Betty Bell May 6, 2006

St. Matthew 22:29-33

22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. 22:31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 22:32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 22:33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

It is my privilege today, to stand before you and tell you about the confession of faith, of one Elizabeth Jane Bell. This is because it was my privilege for the past 10 years to know Betty, and to be her pastor. It was my privilege to know her and to love her... and to watch what the Lord wrought when He gave Betty the faith He gave her in baptism. All of Betty's life was devoted to her family and to her Lord. She made no apologies for this...and she lived her life in love...and she lived this life of love because she knew something that the world does not know and will not know...her God and Lord is the God of the living... and He promised her eternal life in Christ Jesus! Betty's life, was a life reflecting what our Lord has done for her... and the joy she had because of our Lord's great gift to her!

The Creator's power can be seen in the eagle's flight and the power in the legs of a horse. **There is power** in rushing wind and wave... **in shaking earth... volcanic eruptions**, avalanches, mud-slides, and ocean's depths. **There is even "power"** of a kind in the wild mountain flowers, butterflies, sunsets, and autumn leaves...**power** in their beauty. **All the pagans... even the Pharisees** in our text, know this power. **It is the power of the Law and of death. It says: "There is a god and you, O man, are not it. You are small. You are weak. You will die."**

The wind and waves... volcanic ash... talons of eagles... tigers' jaws...all powerful... **but they** do not care for men. **These powerful things** are not moved by men. **They are not tame** and they care nothing for us. **We stand small** and insignificant in the Grand Canyon. **Dandelions hold** more artistic beauty than the paintings of the Old Masters or Bach's chorales. **Our technology... our crowning civilization... is driven** by lust for power and lust for flesh. **What is man** that the Creator should be mindful of him? **Who are we** against such power? **We cannot stop** a hurricane. **There are cancers** we cannot cure as we see so clearly here today. **So what good are we?? We add little** to the earth. **Many will say** that for the most part, we are a blight. **We get in the way. We interfere with** nature and we pollute and then after we have done all of that**We all, eventually, die.**

Many people in the world hold to such thoughts...**they even** promote such thinking as "common wisdom." **But our Lord Jesus** has a different take on this. **Jesus tells us** that there is more than what we just see with our eyes in this world. **Jesus does not** hold to the "**common wisdom**" that is so popular with the world. **As is so often the case** with our God...**there is much, much more** than what just meets the eye!

Jesus would say to such world wisdom "**You do err, not knowing the Scriptures or the Power of God!**" **There is a power of God** revealed in the Scriptures that the Pharisees did not know....**that the world** does not know even today!! **Abraham is not dead. Abraham lives. Betty Bell lives! The greatest Power** of God... **God's truest character...the thing** for which God would be known to the whole world....**this is not found** in nature.

This great POWER is found in the Bible...**it is the Word** of God and in the Name of Jesus... **who is the Word** of God in the flesh. **Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** and all the saints of old are not dead. **They live. So, too,** does our sister Betty...live!! **Betty's God... our God is the God of the living. He is Life. That's what Betty** would want you know today. **Betty's faith** is absolute. **She knew and now knows completely** the real Power of God.

Betty trusted in what Jesus did for her...**for you... for me...for the** whole world. **Betty knew and** trusted that her Lord Jesus died too. **She knew and** she celebrated that Jesus took up our Flesh for this purpose... **to die** our death... **to pay** our ransom...**to meet** the Justice of God... **to crush** the devil's head and drown all of hell's demons in His Blood... **He did** this to open heaven. **He died** a gruesome, tortuous death...**He died** seemingly weak small and insignificant on the cross... **He died** alone and in agony.

But He is not dead. **He lives! He is Life. He died so** that Betty would not... **so that** she would be free... **so that** the devil would shut his mouth and all accusations be removed. **He rose to** justify her... **to prepare** the way for her.

Here, my friends, is the real Power of God. **It is Grace. The free gift! It is the** power of Life and perfect love... **the power** of forgiveness. **By this Power** all things are possible... **sinner**s are declared to be saints.... **the dead** rise and live...**peace is** given in the midst of turmoil and joy in sorrow. **The hopeless are given hope ...and the wisdom** of the world is turned on its head...**God's real Power** is now made known.

Betty first encountered this great power of God when He came to her and gave her real life...**His Life...in the** saving waters of Holy Baptism in February of 1927. **Betty has always** known what the Pharisees did not... **what the** world does not... **that Abraham** is not dead. **On the day** Betty was baptized in Zion Lutheran Church in Elgin North Dakota... **God made** her a very special promise. **He... the living** God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, promised would be her God. **He would provide** for her... **love her** all her days... **and would** never let her go. **He would keep** her so that she would not die ... **no more** than Abraham died.

We need to remember that Betty is His and not ours. **After all,** she is baptized. **She belongs to** Christ. **He bought her** for Himself ...**not for** us.

We could not hold her here. **As much as** we loved this woman... **we simply** could not hold her here in this vale of tears... **of regrets** and sorrows... **surgeries and chemotherapy... no...this was** not Betty's home. **She did not** belong to us. **She is His. He loves her** more than we do or could. **He is the** Very One who died to make her His own... **and so** now she is where she belongs. **She is home,** where we long to be.

All of her life, Betty loved the Lord...**she loved** her family and she loved this congregation. **If you talked** to Betty for longer than just a few minutes... **if you** got to know her at all... **she would** find a way to share her God given faith with you. **It may have** been a kind word and a warm hug. **It may have** been a favorite Bible verse that she had on her mind or a part of a sermon she heard. **Even while she** was ill, Betty would come down to the Care Center to help get people into the services that we hold down there twice monthly. **She didn't do this for brownie points or to score herself some points for Heaven. She know that she could never earn her way to Heaven. She did all** that she did because she wanted to share what she had been given by her Lord. **She knew the** real Power of God...**she knew** that our God is the God of the Living and not the dead! **So, even while** sick and afflicted with cancer... **Betty shared her** faith because that God given faith **was her** peace... **her life... and joy!**

And as I look back over the nearly ten years I have known this dear woman, I think her favorite words were simply..."**I love you!"** **She loved much,** and she was loved by many. **Betty willingly opened** her heart to those around her and she shared what she had been given from her Lord...**Love.**

This last Saturday I went over to Betty's place and communed her at her request. **She was very** weak and very tired. **She gratefully took** her Lord's Body and Blood as she welcomed His forgiveness and strength... **and it** seemed that she had drifted off to sleep. **I finished the** Communion Rite by giving Betty the Lord's Benediction and I quietly said..."**we love you."** **I picked up** my communion wares and slipped down the hallway... **and as** I got just about halfway down the hall...**I hear "I love you"** coming from the bedroom.

That one "I love you" summed up Betty Bell for me. **Love, Christian love** was what Betty was all about and that is what she joyfully shared. **A love that was centered on the true Power of this God of the Living! And it is** this God given Love that we take comfort in this day as we grieve and wait to follow her.

And we can follow her. **We can go** where she has gone. **We can see** her again. **For she is** not dead. **Betty's God, Father,** Son, and Holy Spirit, is the God of the living. **Betty lives. We can be** reunited. **We can hold** her and kiss her and laugh with her again if we hold to this same hope that Betty now in all of it's fullness... **make this** same confession... **read these** same Scriptures...**moved by** God we can **know** this greatest of all mysteries and power: **Jesus lives. Jesus loves. Jesus forgives.** In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen

Rev. Eric M. Christiansen