



## St John Lutheran Church

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### 2nd Cor.2: 14-16

#### Things Are Not as They Appear!

#### Sermon for the funeral of Mary Hilliard

**Anyone who** knew Mary, knew that she was very particular about her appearance. **She always did** her best to make herself look good...**and that** was especially true when she came to this house of worship to appear before her Lord as she gave Him her worship and praise. **It is with** that in mind that I chose this text for the occasion of her funeral.

**2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?**

**Grace in** the One Who always leads us in the Victory march by our Lord Jesus Christ... **and because** of the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ... **He shines** through us in every place. **Because of the fragrance** of Christ we are to God... **among those** being saved... **living among** those perishing. **On the one hand... to these... a sweet** aroma from death into death... **and on** the other hand to those from life into life.

**And for these** things... **who is** equal to the task? **Not that from** ourselves are we equal to the task... **to consider** anything as "of ourselves"... **but the** One equal to the task for us (is) from God! **Our Lord Jesus Christ**, the Victor over sin, death and the devil.

**Dear hurting and** grieving family and friends of our beloved Mary, most especially Mel... **Mary's** soul mate and husband. **I know how** bleak things look right now...**our Lord** knows EXACTLY how you feel right now. **That is why** He came to do what He did for us. **He knows the** pain of grief. **He knows how** it feels to have a loved one ripped from you by this thing called death. **The world tells** us that this is just a natural part of the circle of life... **but I** would tell you today... **that if** death were so natural... **and if** death was just a part of the circle of life...**it would** not hurt us the way it does when a lived one dies...**nor would** it hold the fear it holds over us as we live our lives!  
**No...Death is NOT natural at all.**

**We were not** created to die...**but to** live forever with our Lord...**face to face with Him forever...it was sin...man's rebellion... that brought** this thing called death upon us! **And it is Jesus Christ...the Very Son of God, who was sent by God to pay for our sin and defeat this things**

**called death once and for all! Because Christ died for us and then rose from the dead that First Easter Sunday... things are not as they appear.**

**Scripture records** for us the whole history of God's people... **and as** one reads that history... **most of** the time (at least by the world's reckoning) things always seem to go wrong for those who God claims for Himself...**those He** Promises to love and deliver from all evil. **Looking through the** lens that the world would give us... **being loved** by God would seem to be a guarantee for suffering and hardship. **But the** world cannot see things the way they truly are...**for the** reality is much different than how things appear at first blush!

**Things sure seemed** terrible for Joseph... **remember he** was sold into slavery by his very own brothers...**then he** was thrown into prison in foreign land...**things looked** absolutely abysmal for Joseph... **His brothers** meant to harm him...**prison was** meant to break him... **but God** meant all that happened to Joseph for his good... **and the** future good of His people! **Inspite of the** harm the world intended for Joseph...**inspite of** the pain and the hurtful circumstances he found himself in...**God was** in control of all things... **and Joseph** ended up becoming the second most powerful man in Egypt. **At first it** appeared that Joseph was doomed...**but he** was delivered according to our Lord's purpose! **Things for Joseph** were most certainly **NOT** like they first seemed.

**Then there is** Job. **Things seemed devastating** to Job... **God having** taken away almost everything from him...**wife, children, property... all gone.** **And on top** of all of that...**as if that** were not misery enough...**Job was** afflicted with horrible and debilitating sickness...**suffering painful** and odious boils all over his body. **Things were so** bad that Job's friends told him to just curse God so that he might die. **But God would** not let Job go... **it was** God who built a rock solid and Divine faith in Job...**a supernatural** faith so strong that Job continued to remember the God. **And this was** the same God who not only gave Job this Divine faith and trust in Him...**but kept** on giving good gifts, and blessings to Job until Job was completely restored. **Things were not at all as they first appeared for Job.**

**Then there is** our Lord Jesus. **Nothing looked bleaker** than God-in-the-flesh beaten with a cat of nine tails until He was a bloody pulp. **And if that** were not pain enough...**this same** Jesus...**this same** Son of God in the flesh was nailed to a cross where He died and was later that same day buried! **All hope seemed** lost... **But it wasn't...**not by a long shot! **For it was** in His weakest moment...**the moment** when all of the torture had finally taken it's toll...**that moment** just before His death that He looked the weakest and most impotent of all...**yet it** was in that precise moment...**that moment** when He was at His weakest... **that Jesus** did something no one else in all the world's history could do... **He died... and in** that death took all of our sins to His tomb. **The world and** the devil thought that the Son of God was dead and gone...**that He** was now impotent and no longer relevant. **Yet in His** death, He paid for our sins...**and in** His Resurrection this same Jesus won for us Eternal Life! **Things were definitely** not as they appeared!

**This is what** our sister Mary believed all of her life. **She confessed that** this same Jesus was and remains her Lord and Savior. **She trusted in** the hope and the faith that was given to her in her baptism. **She trusted in** the forgiveness of sins that our Lord bestowed on her every week... **when**

she and Mel would take the Lord's Supper...**fully confident** of the hope and the certainty of her place in Christ's Kingdom!

**And it is** that hope to which we cling to now above all else. **For the hope** of Mary's eternal salvation and your own... **you can** rely solely upon Christ Jesus your Savior....**just as** Mary did...**just as** Mel still does! **In Jesus alone... by His Grace... just like Mary...you are** a made to be a sweet aroma to God the Father. **This, because the** smell of believers to God is not their own...**it is the** fragrance of Christ Himself! **For Christ has** at the cross become the stench of all sins... **and suffered** the hell of the Father's eternal punishment in your place on that Good Friday so long ago. **In a blessed** exchange... **Jesus has** bestowed to you His Own holy righteousness... **credited to** you because of the very faith He gives you. **And now instead** of the smell of death and something repugnant to God...**you are** His Beloved and share the pleasing aroma of Christ.

**At Mary's baptism** right here in 1986, this wondrous trade was given her... **and she** became a new creation in Jesus Christ...**and He** Himself was placed upon her as a garment... **which she** is wearing even now in heaven as the robe of Jesus Own righteousness. **Jesus came** to Mary again and again as she experienced the sweet smell of wine & bread at Holy Communion. **Where our Lord** Jesus gave to her the very Body He gave up unto death for her on the cross... **and the** Blood He shed for her....**this each** time she received our Lord's Supper. **There Jesus blessed** Mary each time with His new \*Last Will and Testament\* for her forgiveness, life & eternal salvation.

**Mary lived her** life everyday with the confidence and the certainty of the Hope that was given to her in her baptism. **She lived her** life with the super natural and Divine faith that only God can give and only God can sustain by way of His Word and Sacraments. **Her greatest fear** was not her own personal death...**Mary's greatest** fear was that her family...**her loved** ones would not know the certainty and hope that she herself had and now has in Jesus Christ! **Mary trusted completely** in her Lord and the gifts He bestows... **and if** she could tell you all anything right now...**she would** smile and simply say "**look to Jesus...trust in Him ... and Him alone for He is Life!**"

**Yes, this past** Thanksgiving morning things looked ever so bleak for Mary... **as they** no doubt appeared on a Good Friday long ago for Jesus in His death & burial. **But things are** not as they appeared there in the hospital...**there is** more hope than meets the eye in each circumstance. **For just as** Jesus went from life that dark hour... **He returned** to life to reveal His victory over sin, death & the devil that Easter Sunday morning!

**So too is** our hope for Mary... **that she** went from life to life... **from her** earthly life to her God given heavenly life...**where she** now waits with all of the saints who have gone on before her....**life... face to** face with her Lord... **in His** Glory as she and all the company of Heaven await the Day of Resurrection with us on that Last Day, when Christ returns to take us from this valley of tears & sorrows to Himself in heaven. **The place He** now prepares for us! In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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