**Luke 2:25-32 June 24, 2022 (Marjorie Reckow Funeral)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ but especially to you the family and friends of Marjorie Reckow,

A friend thinks of others. One of the most famous verses in the Bible that speaks about friends is John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.” Which is why we sing that hymn we just did. What a friend we have in Jesus, the Savior who laid down his life for us, his friends. Which is why we have comfort on a day like today, where we just sang and are reminded of the type of friend Jesus is to us, “Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?” Today we gather to remember a woman who to some was a mother, to others a grandmother or great grandmother, but to all of us gathered here, a friend. That was how Margie was, immediately she was your friend. From the first time I walked into her house to give her communion and she offered me candy from the many bowls out on the counter. To sitting down and working on the puzzle she had sprawled out on the table. To her asking about my family and how I was doing when I was there to provide spiritual care for her. Margie was the type of person who would instantly become your friend. Even if she was family, even if she was a member of your church or you saw her in the community, or you were blessed to go to her house and play some cards. She was a woman who knew how to be a great friend and was a caring person. But when we talk about friendship, love, and care we as Christians see it as more than just handing out candies and hosting card parties.

If the greatest act of love was for Jesus to die in our place on account of our sin then we can see how love for friends means sacrifice. Which doesn’t seem fair, but it’s true. A sacrifice happens in service and friendship. It’s not always obvious, but somebody has to pay the “bill” so to speak. After all somebody has to pay for those candies. Someone has to have a house that can host the parties. Someone has to prepare, set up, serve, take down, clean up…..There’s always a price. For all of us gathered here today you are staring at the price of sin. And it’s a big one. And it’s a bitter one. Hear the words of Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death.” The paycheck you receive for your sin is what you see before you this day, and that’s death. A hard truth, and not a happy one. But the reality is that Margie was a sinner, just like you and just like me. She couldn’t earn her salvation through all the wonderful acts of friendship, kindness, and care she showed in her life. It’s not how it works, and some of you may even be asking yourself, “If Margie, this sweet, wonderful woman I’ve known all my life couldn’t be saved by her works, how could I? What hope do I have?” The answer is none. On our own, outside of Christ, there is no hope on a day like today, there is no comfort when we think of our sister in Christ Margie if not also remembering Jesus Christ. Which is why we can’t only talk about Margie and her kindness and caring soul, we have to talk of the one who sacrificed his life for her sins and yours, the one whom Simeon held in his arms in our Gospel lesson, when Jesus was just a baby and was overjoyed because he had seen His salvation.

And Simeon was old. Old enough to have made plenty of sacrifices in his life, living and serving in the temple. And Simeon was promised by God to see the Christ before he died, but the days just went on and on and on. Simeon and Margie were similar in the sense that both of them could look at the advanced ages of their lives and wonder what God truly had in store. Because to be older means that your body sees the decay that sin has brought to creation, and sadly Margie had to experience that, just as we all do as we get older. Margie had struggles seeing, hearing, and getting around from the very moment that I met her. It was why I went to her house and got to enjoy her wonderful hospitality. She had trouble getting around and her seeing and hearing only got worse. Which made what she did for others a sacrifice in itself, because she still wanted to serve, and care, and host, and do all of these wonderful things she did all throughout her life, but over time, she couldn’t. But love is sacrifice, and she sacrificed for you, her friends and family. She gave until she couldn’t anymore. I’m sure you can think of a time in your own life where Margie blessed you and sacrificed on your behalf. That’s the kind of person she was, and her faith was the constant. It was the guiding light, even as the world around her became harder to see and hear. Her faith was her comfort in the midst of all the trials and tribulations because she knew where she was going and she looked forward to being with her Lord, and her Savior, and her friend Jesus Christ. Like Simeon she looked forward to the day when her eyes would see her salvation, not just in the promise of the Gospel and the words of the Scriptures but to physically be in the presence of Jesus Christ, which she is, even as we speak. Her eyes see your salvation clearly. She doesn’t have the limitations she had here with us at the end. She sees clearly. Hears clearly. Thinks clearly. Moves with no limitation. She doesn’t have to sacrifice anymore, and that is our joy and comfort on a day when death stares us so bluntly right in the face. The final similarity between her and Simeon is that both of them prayed for the same thing and received it, as Simeon sings in the Nunc Dimittis that we still sing in our Divine Service after Holy Communion, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace.” Margie had to same desire, to depart in peace, and God blessed her with that gift, just as he did to Simeon.

I have many good memories with Margie in a short period of time. I was blessed to receive her care and kindness. Just a few months ago I was coming to Green Acres to visit her when I walked in and found her sitting on the floor. She had taken a tumble after dinner and the wonderful staff there got her back to her room and we talked. What I remember was that she was calm, embarrassed perhaps, but she was still happy to visit, to receive Communion, and by the end of our visit she was smiling and offering me candy from the bowls on the table. I was also blessed to see her willingness to sacrifice for others. It was 2020 and as we were looking toward Advent and Christmas we weren’t sure how we were going to do a Christmas Program safely. The Board of Education here at Trinity decided to make a video Christmas Program and I was going to get people to record clips of themselves reading Bible verses. I wanted to get a bunch of different people, almost to the point where you wouldn’t know who was coming next when you were watching it, and so one day, as I was making my way to the homebound members for Communion I got to Margie’s, and got out my phone, and asked her if I could record her reading a verse for the Christmas Program. And to think back on it now, what to me at the time was just another verse of the list, because I was scrambling to get enough people to read and I knew I had to get it together before Christmas, what to me was just a request that I had made at that point to many people, was to Margie a huge sacrifice. I was asking her to read something when she had limited sight, to read something that she hadn’t prepared to read and that she could barely see, to put out in front of the whole congregation and she didn’t really know what it was we were doing. And as kind and caring as she was she was hesitant, it was a huge favor to ask. But reluctantly she did it, and we had to record it probably 4 or 5 times, because she would stop reading halfway through and say that she could do it better, that she wasn’t happy with how it went. And finally we got it. And we showed the video here in Church before Christmas. And for a brief time, probably less than a minute, projected up on the wall behind me, Margie was able to share the words of the Gospel, and speak about the true meaning of Christmas, and be seen by her brothers and sisters in Christ who hadn’t gotten to see her in a long time. And you can still see her, you can still see that program it’s up on youtube if you just search for Trinity Onekama. She sacrificed for her church in that moment, which was something she had done her whole life, and it was the final sacrifice she gave for those that she knew were her friends.

That was who she was. She gave, because Christ gave to her. How God had given her life and forgiveness and hope. He gives the same things to you. Freely, like the candy in the dish. Take as many as you want, and even though there is a price to giving it out, for you it’s free, for her it was a sacrifice she was willing to make. Christ’s love is seen in many and various places, it’s found even here on a day of flowers, caskets, and graves. So don’t mourn without hope, don’t give in to despair, and don’t forget the sacrifices that were made for your salvation. Take Margie’s sacrifices with you in your own life, so you may sacrifice for the needs of others and remember her in those moments. In that way you won’t give in to the temptation of this world, the lie that makes you believe that Margie has just ceased to be. She isn’t gone, she’s just with her friend and Lord and Savior. And you will see her again when you go to your own eternal rest. Until then, know with confidence that the same Jesus who died for Margie died for you and rose from the dead to declare His victory over death and for death to not have the final say when it comes to the stories of our lives. May that bring you comfort in the days, the weeks, the months, and the years to come as you remember Margie fondly, a woman who gave, who loved, and whose faith lived on despite the sacrifices she had to make. God be with you and bless you this day and always in his love shown through his sacrifices for you.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.