



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Funeral Sermon for Warren Lindner
June 29, 2023

Victory Over Death

John 14:1-6

¹ “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² “In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ “And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Dear friends in Christ, the world wants us to think that death is natural. It isn't. Life is not a circle; it's a straight line. We were created to live, and that without end. We only die because of sin – the sin of Adam passed on from generation to generation and our own actual sins.

Death is always a passage. But it's not always to a better place. Some people die and go to Hell. That, too, is most unnatural, for we were created not only to live, but always to be with God.

Death is overcome and Hell is escaped by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in our place. He has paid the price for our transgressions. He offers Himself, His Father, and His Spirit to us for free. He forgives all who believe and trust in Him. They do not die. They pass through death into life. He brings them to the place He's prepared for them with His Blood.

That life, lived in glory and bliss, is as life was meant to be: full and complete, without sickness or regret, without sorrow, loneliness, or distress. There we are as we were meant to be: in communion with the Holy Trinity, forever perfect and holy, forever at peace and in joy.

So, on the night of His betrayal, on the eve of His crucifixion, our Lord said to His disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me.” The disciples, of course, were troubled by the death of Jesus on that Good Friday. They mourned for Him and were afraid of the Jews. They thought He was dead forever and they were doomed.

He did die on that cruel tree – no mistake about that. It was the most unjust, painful, unnatural death the world has ever seen. God died on a cross, and His agony was not merely physical; it was spiritual as well. Jesus committed no sin, yet He bore the full burden and weight of the sins of all men. He was forsaken by His Father so that we would be accepted and welcomed. He laid down His life as a sacrifice to make us clean.

That's why the disciples should not have mourned. They should've rejoiced. Jesus



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died, but He's not dead. He rose again to life on Easter morning. He defeated and *ended* death. He opened heaven. He reconciled the world to Himself and satisfied all the demands of Justice. He emptied His wrath into Himself, to spare and redeem us. The death of Jesus should not make us sad. It should fill us with joy, for it's our salvation, our rescue from death's icy grasp.

Here and now, though, like the disciples before us, *our* hearts are troubled. The flesh is weak; it wants assurance. It wants to pretend that death is not real or that it's natural and so it's okay, that it's no more significant than 90-degree days in July.

But that's not reality. Death hurts because it was never meant to be. We cannot shrink from the truth that afflicts us. The horrible fact of the matter is that we are infected with sin and death and it won't go away just by wishing.

But it will go away – in God's own time, by God's own promise. We live by faith. We trust the Word of God. We hope in the future. We rest in the confidence that this sad life is not all there is. Christian burial is a sacred act for the Church because we believe that the dead, like Jesus, will rise.

This truth eases our sorrow, but it does not remove it. Our journey here continues and our suffering is not yet complete. We don't know everything, but what we do know is that the Father is revealed as gracious and merciful in His Son. The only way our hearts are calmed is by the healing touch of His love.

You believe in God. Believe also in Jesus. Rejoice that in Christ's victory over death God has made you His own. Rejoice in the midst of your grieving that Warren has been given relief and release. Rejoice that these sad, dismal days of separation and uncertainty will not last forever. A new day is coming. The dead will rise. Death will die. Life will live. And Warren will come forth from his grave to live with Jesus forever.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh. Blessed be the Name of the Lord. He does all things well. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen