



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

**Sermon for the Funeral of Lynn Olson**  
August 10, 2023

# Death Is Swallowed up in Victory

## 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

*<sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” <sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Beloved, I tell you a mystery: Lynn has fallen asleep. He’s not dead; his soul has left his body to go to the eternal reward of the just, not because of the things he did, or because he was *in himself* just, but because he found righteousness through forgiveness by the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ in his place. We will plant his mortal remains into God’s green earth not in despair or fear, but in the firm and eager expectation that he will rise again. For Lynn is not dead. He lives.

I don’t mean to say that you shouldn’t be sad. Lynn was a good man and he’ll be missed. As others would happily attest, he was a hard worker and was proud to have served his country. He loved his country. He loved his family. He loved his wife, kids, and grandkids. And his passing will leave a hole in your hearts that no one will be able to fill quite like he did. Heaven’s gain is surely our loss. But the crosses Lynn bore through this valley of sorrow have now been removed. And *that’s* great cause for joy. You still have *your* crosses, however. You have to go on, for a time, without him. So we rejoice and give thanks for the peace he enjoys in heaven even while we ourselves still suffer.

Now, there’s a temptation at times like this, to which we’ve all succumbed at one time or another, to think that we could do better than God. If God is so good, why do people suffer? Why do bad things happen? In our darkest moments, we rage against God. Life shouldn’t have to be so hard, so complicated, so easily thrown into trouble and hardship. But it is. And that, sad to say, is *our* fault, not God’s.

The problem with asking questions like these is that we place ourselves in the role of God. We imagine a kinder, gentler, more gracious and loving god than the God of Abraham. We think we could have a fuller Gospel, that we’re in some way more loving than the God who sent His Son into the hands of killers to set the murderers free. That’s our sin and our shame. It’s our rebellion against who God really is. There’s no easy



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answers to these questions. And that's to be expected. Scripture says that God's thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways. He's God. We're not. He knows what's best and does all things well. It takes faith to believe that, but it's true. He *is* good. His mercy really *does* endure forever.

And so we believe that good comes from the cross – in fact, the greatest good. That's why we call the day Jesus died, "Good Friday." Because by that Holy Cross our salvation has been won, our ransom paid, our sins forgiven. Jesus died in our place, for our guilt, and freely delivers His righteousness, innocence, and blessedness to those who believe and trust in Him. God has provided. *Death* is dead. And, *that*, finally, is the answer.

Good comes from *our* crosses, too – the troubles of this world that we Christians suffer. For the student is *not* above his Teacher, nor is the disciple above his Master. We, too, go the way of suffering. And in suffering, through trouble and trial, through persecution and sorrow, God disciplines His disciples. And in so doing He makes them stronger. He teaches them not to trust in the things of this life, but to trust in Him. He gives them conviction and teaches them that He and His Word are the only things that do *not* change, the only things that endure, the only things that bring real and lasting comfort, rest, and peace. This is how He keeps His children in saving Faith.

Lynn, of course, was flesh and blood, just like us. He had his complaints. He knew weariness, sorrow, and frustration. He had his own peculiar weaknesses and strengths. But he knew that one day his difficulties, his illnesses, his sorrow, every bit of his life-situation, would be traded in for a crown. And now it has been. As John writes: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). There is a time for weeping, but Lynn is beyond that now. There are no tears in heaven.

So it is that we say: Lynn is not dead. He lives. For Christ, his Lord and Savior, died for him and *Jesus* lives, and His disciples, who've followed Him in suffering, follow Him also in glory. So, too, someday, will you, who believe and trust in Him. Neither is your sorrow, your loneliness, your separation from those you love who've departed in the Faith, without end. There will be a great reunion in heaven. For Lynn, this has already begun. For, not only has he been reunited with his dear Bonnie and all who have gone before us in the Faith, but he has been united to his Savior, whom he has seen now with his own eyes. One day we who share their faith in Christ will join them. And it will be perfect. Everything that ails you, all those nagging questions and worries – they'll all be gone. No more having to ask, seek, or knock, for the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be for us more than we could ever need. Until then, may God in His infinite mercy comfort you with His compassion and give you – as He has given Lynn – victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen