

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

**Between memory and hope**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,  
“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4)*

Yesterday was a beautiful day in Little Falls, on the cool side for a mid-August day, blue sky, plenty of sunshine, a gentle breeze off the Mississippi River, bluebirds fluttering along the river bank. The family and a few friends of Marcia Nelson, who died last March just as the pandemic began to surge and Minnesota began to shut down, gathered outside on that beautiful day to celebrate her life—a celebration the coronavirus had put on hold. It was an honor for me to preside over the celebration of this remarkable woman’s life.

At the end of my homily, I noted that a Christian memorial service is a very strange moment in time. It is a moment that is lived between memory and hope. When Christians gather together at a memorial service they are filled with memories as they remember the life they shared with their loved one who has passed into God’s future.

That’s what was going on for all of the folks gathered yesterday morning—they were all filled with their own personal memories of Marcia. A Christian memorial service is the time when we honor those memories, when we tell stories, when we weep and laugh in the remembering, when we celebrate a life. It is part of our healing.

But a Christian memorial service is not only about remembering. As I wrote a moment ago, memorial services take place between memory and hope. A Christian memorial service not only fills us with memories of our loved one, it also fills us with hope—the hope that we will meet again in the future that God is preparing for us—that time when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, when death will be no more, and mourning and crying and pain will be no more. That time when we will celebrate together in the presence of God all the goodness, all the joy, all the happiness that God has saved from our time on earth.

May I encourage you to keep Marcia’s family in your prayers as they continue to mourn her passing. Because of Covid-19, the service had to be limited to family and just a couple of friends. The service was recorded and we expect to post it on First Lutheran’s website later this week. Click the link on this page and join the celebration of a good life.

Prayer: Loving God, may the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit and the promise of the resurrection bring hope and joy in such times. Amen.