

Sermon for the Christian Burial of Clark Emanuel Eveler, ★9.iii.1921 †2.i.2008
Ev. Lutheran Church of St. James the Apostle / Brogue, Chancetford Twp., York Co., Penna.
Sunday, 6.i.2008, 14.00, Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord
ELW Funeral Rite with Holy Communion – Setting 5
Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 121; Romans 8:31-35, 37-39; John 14:1-6

Jesu Juva!

Alleluia! Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the dead; to Him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen. Alleluia!

The Holy Gospel according to Saint John, the Fourteenth Chapter!

Glory to You, O Lord!:

**"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.
In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.
And you know the way where I am going."
Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"
Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.**

--John 14:1-6

The Gospel of the Lord!

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ!

[Obituary + Other Readings & Comments]

Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was
and Who is to come! ✠ Amen.

**In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so,
would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come
again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may
be also. (John 14:2,3)**

In His farewell discourse to the Disciples whose feet He
has washed, whom He has fed with His very life, identified
with the elements of bread and wine, and whom He now
calls 'friends,' the Lord Jesus, for whom there is little room
left in this world, reminds His friends of a promise He had
made to them:

**In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so,
would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
(14:2)**

Where did Our Lord say this, we may ask? That is, we
look in the text preceding this saying for His promise to

make a place for the Disciples, but we look in vain, for the saying is not there. It must have been spoken, for He says it was, but it is not written. The promise to which Our Lord refers is one of His many teachings, of which John the Beloved Disciple writes at the end of His Gospel:

But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. (21:25)

The closest text to this promise to make a place for the Disciples is found two chapters earlier in John's Gospel, also in Jesus' farewell discourse on the night of His handing over to the violence of this world. There, in the Twelfth Chapter, He describes the place of the Disciple with Him:

If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. (12:26)

The Disciples had been with their Master for three years. Wherever He had healed the sick and forgiven sinner, they had been with Him. Wherever He had fed the hungry both with bread and with teaching, they had been with Him. Wherever He had spoken the truth to power, corruption, greed, bigotry and hypocrisy, they had been with Him. Now, in this saying earlier in John, Jesus is inviting His friends to be with Him once more, with Him all the way to the Cross. Will they be with Him? In our text, from the Fourteenth Chapter, He quiets their fearful hearts full of self-doubt by assuring them that they *will* be with Him, for, just as He *had promised*, His task now would be to prepare a place for them to be with Him and His Heavenly Father.

It was my loss not to have known Clark Emanuel Eveler before a stroke robbed him of the facility of normal speech, but it was a blessing to have known him through

his family, through his still vital exuberance and joy in worshipping in the LORD's House, and through a memory that was perhaps the reference point for his whole life, a memory burned into his mind so deeply that he could recount it clearly half a century later. It is a story you have heard as well, a story of hours spent on an Italian mountainside under enemy fire, hours of pain with a shattered and nearly severed arm. "I had a time getting down from that mountain!" was his understatement to me, and to you who knew him better than this latecomer.

For those of us who have never served in the armed forces in peacetime or in war, and for those of us, whether civilians or military veterans, who have never —THANKS BE TO GOD!— found ourselves in the midst of a battle or in the way of the juggernaut of war, it is really impossible to imagine what he and those like him then experienced, or

the terror soldiers and civilians in war this very hour experience. But, in telling and re-telling what happened to him, Clark was describing something which touches on a reality common to all of us at one time or another, in one way or another and for all of us now, as we stand with him just outside the gate of death. That is the fact of being out of place, of being at the wrong place at the wrong time, of finding that, in this hour or in our last hour, there is no more place for us.

This reality, self-evident not only to soldiers but to refugees of every nation and every age, is one against which we protect ourselves with every defense at our disposal, carefully managing both our resources and our relationships to preserve a level of comfort and the illusion of permanence and invincibility. But despite that, beloved family members and friends do leave us, by choice, through

circumstance or by death. Youth and health decline into decrepitude which is bearable only if tempered with wisdom. The world itself refuses to stop changing at that point at which we thought we had begun to understand it, until, finally, there is no place for us here or anywhere that we can see.

That is all true, but the Gospel confronts us with a higher truth, with a mystery, with a surprise more astonishing than that which astonished Clark Eveler as he was brought down from that mountain by courageous and compassionate comrades, as his wounds healed and as he learned how to do the work of two strong men with his one arm, as his life with Olga flourished in the lives of two sons and two daughters and the families they founded, the great and gifted family they became for him. When you, perhaps in the past, or at some future remove, or perhaps in this

very hour feel that there is and will be no place for you, then hear the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to you!: *I have made a place for you! There is a place and a purpose for you! Where I am, there you will be, where I suffer and serve in this world, there you will be as my hands and arms, as my feet and legs of love, and there is and will be a place for you with me before my Father's heavenly throne forever! ✠Amen.*

Now to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made of us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. ✠Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!



Gloria in Excelsis Deo!