

## Zion Lutheran Church • Fairbanks, Alaska

Pastor's Monday • May 14, 2007

At 3:45 AM this Pastor's Monday began! It was a call from my youngest sister Sara who lives in San Antonio. She had just gotten a call from our niece Lola in New Orleans sharing the news of my oldest brother Richard's death. He was found "asleep in Jesus" shortly after 5:00 AM (Central Time) by his wife of 50+ years, Lorraine.

Even as I was on the phone with Sara, the thoughts were running through my mind – "God, you sure prepared me for this!" I preached three sermons in the past three days, all focusing on the promises that we have about the life now and the life to come! The first was based on John 14:1-6. Friday afternoon at the Fairbanks Funeral home, the family and a few friends of Ida Klattig gathered to celebrate her entry into eternal life. She is Carey Atkinson's great aunt and had been, for the past four years a faithful member of the group that gathers for worship at the Pioneers' home on Monday evenings for worship. She was 95. "Let not your hearts be troubled.... I go to prepare a place for you...I will come for you... I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me." The second was based on Psalm 90 Saturday afternoon at Pike's Waterfront lodge. The family and friends of Jim Banks, Jayne Patterson's father, gathered for his memorial service. I had the privilege of visiting him and his wife Myna in their home in Anchorage during pastor's conference last Fall. Before that, I had only met him in passing, but in that visit, I shared the message of salvation with him and received assurance that he knew Jesus as his savior. He passed away at age 84 in January. "Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply them unto wisdom..." Then yesterday the third based on John 6:20 "Don't be afraid, Jesus told them, it is I." – 21days.com – the 2<sup>nd</sup> sermon in the series on time. In a light hearted way I had made a joke of not finding my name in the obituaries – and attempted to turn that into a sermon that focused on how little time we have in God's great time and how none of us knows when the clock runs out for us.

It is now shortly after 8:00 AM... so much has happened in the past four hours. I spent over an hour on the phone with Alaska Airline Mileage Plan hoping for a ticket – none available and did find one to purchase leaving tomorrow morning at 1:30 and returning Friday evening. I've called all of my children and let them know. Rachel, the daughter in Denver, was in the middle of getting her girls off to school... and an hour ago she emailed me this...

Dad,

I just wanted to let you know that I cried on Kennedy's shoulder this morning! She wanted me to be happy that Uncle Dick could meet Poppy Becke [Rachel's father-in-law who passed away late last year] now and they could be friends. Also, she made me listen to our "Jesus songs" CD on the way to school so we could imagine Uncle Dick singing in heaven.

What a thrill it is for me to know that my grandchildren (at least one of them – Kennedy is a first grader and the oldest of the four) get it!

Dick (as he was known in the family) was the oldest of the five surviving children. I wrote him a long letter of appreciation when he retired nine years ago, and then a much shorter letter on the occasion of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination:

Dear Brother Richard,

August 2002

*Just about the time I start getting depressed about getting older and looking toward retirement, I catch another glimpse of you streaking (not in the 70's sense of course) across the horizon! I think to myself, "There he goes again!" And I add a prayer under my breath, "Thank God! Maybe there is hope for me!"*

*Your modeling of life and ministry has given me hope again and again – first for the ministry itself, the ministry need not be the crushing load it was for our father, but that ministry could be a source of joy and excitement, a place where one's creativity could be used for God's glory. Second, your life and ministry has given me hope for my own family as I have seen you and Lorraine take great delight in your daughters and in their families, neither holding them too tight nor depriving them of your admiration and positive mirroring. Finally, and this is the occasion of this letter, that getting older and retiring does not mean a backing away from life or ministry! This is particularly important to me as our brother John Mark enters the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last month of his active ministry before retirement. The thought of me being the last of the brothers in active ministry has been overwhelming, until I see you streaking (not in the 70's sense of course) streaking across the horizon again!*

*Your ministry and now the continuation of your ministry "in, with, and under" retirement give me great cause for celebration and hope for myself. May God continue to bless you and Lorraine as you (in the words of our Mother's favorite Psalm) "Taste and see that the Lord is Good."*

*May you continue to see and taste!*

And he did for the next four and a half years. I can't say anything more except that I am so thankful that I was able to visit with him four times last year (the Katrina trips) and then I was with him this Spring when Judy and I went down to be with her mother. All four of us surviving sibling visited this Spring and all of knew that these visits could possibly be the last on this earth – and they were.

As I prepare to leave, I want to encourage each of you to prepare for our commitment weekend, this Saturday and Sunday, May 19 and 20<sup>th</sup>. You will be invited to the altar to renew your commitment to Jesus in the use of your Spiritual Gifts, in the use of your time, and in the stewardship of your material possession (money and assets). God can only work with us and through us to the extent that we are willing to give back to him what he was first given us. The final small group Bible Study led by David Miller is a wonderful reminder of God's claim on all that we have.

Our Lutheran School Development Task Force will host Mr. Bob Fowls, Principal of Trinity Lutheran School in Bend, OR on the weekend of May 26 and 27. He will be making a presentation about Lutheran Schools and how they can be a Mission Outreach at the 9:45 Bible Study Hour on the 27<sup>th</sup>. The following weekend we will be hosting Mr. Dick Weniger, who is the Education Executive for the Northwest District of the LCMS. I have called a congregation meeting to discuss the proposed Lutheran School following the late service on June 3.

This past Friday Joe Baumgarten (our called associate pastor) and wife Cyndi received preapproval for a loan for the purchase of a home. This is cause for a huge thank you to God. They will be arriving in Fairbanks the middle of July. However, Cyndi will be in Fairbanks June 1-3 looking at houses.

Congratulations to our High School Graduates and their parents! Faith Stepping Stones # 8. We had three of our graduate families participate in the 8<sup>th</sup> stepping stone this weekend! WoW! Yeah God.

Blessings.

Pastor K

### **Weekly Prayer Concerns**

#### Cancer

Eva Lose (Mr. Gary's wife)  
Linda Yeakley (Bill Fisher's sister)  
Russell Paju (Marty Paju's father)  
Michael Caskey  
Beth Beeler (Kathy Gappert's sister)

#### Other Illnesses

Dick Korvola  
Daniel Dobberpuhl (Dave and Nancy Dobberpuhl's son)  
Doris Terry

#### Recovery

Nathan Burgess

#### Surgeries

Grady Cofer  
Linda Gronewold  
Danny Bernhardt

#### Deaths

Family of Ida Klattig  
Family of Jim Banks  
Family of Richard Kuehnert

#### Others

Joe and Cyndi Baumgarten and their two children, Duncan and Maddie, as they prepare to move to Alaska and serve at Zion.