

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Why Funerals Should Be Victory Celebrations

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹ Why should funerals be victory celebrations?

Let us look at our text today from First Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13 through 18. ²

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹ ³

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be

¹ | Thessalonians 4:13-15.

with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. ² ₄

The grieving process is described in Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' classic book *On Death and Dying* outlining the five basic stages of grief. ³ ₅ They are denial, ₆ anger, ₇ bargaining, ₈ depression ₉ and then, acceptance.

Funerals are important to give closure to this loss. ₁₀

The Egyptians embalmed mummies and placed their royalty in pyramids. ₁₁

When Lord Jesus raised the little girl from the dead the family had hired professional mourners. ⁴ ₁₂

When He raised the widow's son at Nain mourners were carrying a stretcher out of the town. ⁵ ₁₃

When Jesus raised His friend Lazarus his sisters were weeping as they went to the tomb. ⁶ ₁₄

² 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

³ Kübler-Ross E (1969). *On Death and Dying*. Routledge.

⁴ Matthew 9:23 - When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd . . .

⁵ Luke 7:12 - As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out — the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.

When the Lord, Himself, was entombed, the women planning to anoint His body with spices.⁷

These traditions were all funeral services to help the grieving process along.

The funeral time can be a terrible time of depression and grief. I have seen wailing, screaming and fainting.

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But, for those in Christ Jesus, the funeral service can also be a time of celebration and victory. Why?¹⁶

I. Because Jesus Died - But Rose Again! - v14

Because Jesus died, but rose again!¹⁷

Notice verse 14, **We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**

The Lord's resurrection gives us hope that eternal life is possible. Except for the Lord, all the other people in

⁶ John 11:33 - When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.

⁷ Luke 24:1 - On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

the Bible who were resurrected eventually dies again.
Lord Jesus rose to die no more! ¹⁸

**His death on the cross makes it possible for us to be
His children.** ¹⁹

Another reason why a funeral should be a victory
celebration is . . .

II. Because the Resurrected Lord is Returning With His Children - v16

Because the resurrected Lord is returning with His
children. Verse 16, **For the Lord himself will come
down from heaven, with a loud command, with the
voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of
God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.**

When the Lord comes again it will be a bit noisy. The
archangel will shout commands. Trumpets will blare
out. ²⁰

The Second Coming will be very sudden. It will be like the lightning flashing across the sky. ⁸ ₂₁

No one knows when He is coming. The Lord said, **No one knows about that day or hour**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ⁹ ₂₂

Then, the very last verses found in the Bible say **He is coming soon!** ¹⁰ ₂₃

Then, **the dead in Christ will rise first** to meet the Lord in the air! Verse 16, . . . **and the dead in Christ will rise first.** ₂₄

What happens when you die?

The Second Coming description here appears to be a specific time in history. But, if you should die first, **we are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.** ¹¹ ₂₅

⁸ Matthew 24:27 - For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

⁹ Matthew 24:36.

¹⁰ Revelation 22:20 - He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

¹¹ II Corinthians 5:8.

At that time we will live and reign with Him. ¹² ₂₆ The Lord said to the thief on the cross next to Him, **I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.** ¹³

Although this event is a definite period of time in history, I have a theory about what might happen next.

I think we could, with the Lord, slip out of time into timelessness! I think eternity might be timelessness. Time as we know it would no longer exist.

Albert Einstein gave evidence, mathematically, that time can actually be altered. So, maybe the next step is that it could be done away with altogether!

Just for the fun of it, picture all of human history inside a terrarium. God and the heavenly hosts are outside looking in. History is going on simultaneously.

¹² II Timothy 2:11-12 - If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.

¹³ Luke 23:43.

When we physically die, maybe we step out of time and then, reappear at the rapture **to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.**

This is just my hunch, but it's fun to think about. This way heavenly beings could not only predict future events by seeing them happen inside this box but could step into it occasionally to be seen and to perform miracles. ²⁷

This idea just might blend in with the third reason funerals should be a victory celebration . . .

III. Because We Who Are Alive Will Join Them Forever! - v17

Because we who are alive will join them forever! Verse 17, **After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.** ²⁸

What a comfort to know you will see loved ones again!
The Bible says we will all be in glorious resurrection

bodies; maybe like the Lord's body when He appeared to His disciples after He was resurrected. These bodies will never experience pain nor tears and will never wear out! Even though different from these earthly bodies we are currently in, we will recognize one another. ²⁹

The best part is we will be together forever! ³⁰

The Lord promised, **In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.** ¹⁴ ³¹

The Lord's whole purpose for coming in the first place was because **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** ³²

Why should funerals be victory celebrations?

The Lord reigns and is always in control! ³³

¹⁴ John 14:2-3.

For His redeemed children, physical death is a graduation ceremony.

If you live until He comes again, it will be a victorious reunion!

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