

GOOD FRIDAY COMMUNITY WORSHIP
Aitkin United Methodist Church
April 18, 2014

John 19:25b-30
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
First Lutheran Church

“IT IS FINISHED”

The last thing Jesus did before he died on the cross was to take care of his mother Mary. In his last moments, Jesus gave Mary into the care of his beloved friend John. And Jesus also gave John into the care of Mary. And Jesus gave both of them into the care of the whole Christian family of faith to follow...

Jesus took care of my mother Olga too...

I was privileged to have been able to spend considerable time with my mom during the last few days that she was alive. Having lived under the curse of Alzheimer's for eight years, Mom rallied a little just before the end and was able to be a little clearer and more responsive. On the next to the last day of Mom's life, my brother, my sister-in-law, my wife and I sat around her bed, talking to Mom, singing and praying. When I sang, **“Children of the Heavenly Father,”** the old favorite Swedish hymn, Mom mouthed the words. When we sang, **“Jesus Loves Me,”** she actually got a few, faint words out. When we prayed the **Lord's Prayer**, she prayed with us. On her last day, Mom was still clear enough to respond with appropriate, though brief responses before lapsing into her gibberish. **“Mom, I love you with all of my heart.”** “I love you syz, xab, twe...” **“You are the best mom in all the world.”** “Oh thank you syz, xab, twe...”

Time was growing short, the nursing staff assured us. I leaned over her bed and spoke directly into her ear, **“Mom, do you remember that old picture in Alborn Church, the one with Jesus carrying the little lamb? Remember how you taught me that I was that little lamb, how we all are that little lamb? Mom, that same Jesus is carrying you right now and he is going to bring you home to be with God. There is a special place saved for you at God's heavenly, banqueting table. Dad and Grandma Johanna and Grandpa John are waiting to welcome you. All the people will see you coming and they'll be very glad. And there will be a wonderful meal with no more Alzheimer's, no more cancer and no more dying.”**

I stopped speaking. Mom's last words slipped out then, "**So beautiful.**" Mom long used a potato scoop and a coffee pot to serve, love and care for her many, many guests. That day, the woman, who so loved to serve, became God's heavenly guest. And what a meal they share... "**So beautiful.**"

Jesus took care of his mother Mary, his friend John, my mother Olga, me and the whole company of saints who have lived and died in God's loving care for centuries. Mom and Dad had given me into the loving care of God when I was born. On Mom's last day, we were able to commit her into that same loving care where she'd lived all of her days. We knew it, she knew it and God knew it. Jesus took care of that for us on that ancient cross. "**It is finished.**"

In John's Gospel, Jesus is fulfilling scripture, doing what God had long promised to do. Jesus' death on that cross, **apparently utter defeat** at the hands of the world, was **actually Jesus' enthronement** as the Son of God, King of all creation and Savior of anyone and everyone who needs a Savior. God meant to be hanging on that cross. God meant to show us without a doubt how much God loves the ones who pounded the spikes, the ones who shouted "**crucify,**" the ones who ran and hid, Mary, John, my mom, me and you.

"**It is finished.**" God's plan has been carried out. And what is that plan? Just a couple of chapters earlier in John, Jesus prayed to our Father in heaven "**to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**" (John 17:4) Even after suffering from eight years of Alzheimer's, **Mom still knew Jesus.** But even far more importantly, **Jesus knew her.**

Back then Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" Jesus completed the amazing work of love and grace that he wanted to do for us. "**It is finished.**" Today we say, "**I am so sorry.**" Today we say, "**Thank you so much.**" Some day we too will say, "**So beautiful.**" "**It is finished.**" Thanks be to God. Amen.