

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto to you from God our Father and our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.

I'm sorry that I couldn't be with you today. Elva is my friend. She is your sister, mother, grandmother. Your whole life you loved her and received love from her. I knew her for only ten years, but in those ten years I came to love her too. Like many of you, Elva is my dear friend.

You see, Elva and I shared something very precious. We shared a hope, a faith that endures even now, even in the face of death, and I can say with absolute certainty that more than anything else in the whole world Elva would want you to know these precious words:

*"Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" - *he is risen indeed alleluia**

Because Christ has Risen from the dead, all who believe in Jesus have victory over death. It may not look much like a victory now, but Elva's soul resides in heaven with Jesus, and when Jesus returns Elva will be resurrected from the grave to be made new and without sin, never to die again.

It's hard to wait. It's hard to trust what our eyes can't see. It's hard to take comfort when grandma can't hug you and tell you everything's gonna be alright...but let me tell you a little story about grandma.

You see grandma was born near Hooper in 1923, but the family moved to the farm out near Herman while she was still little. (As an aside, it was at that time Elva said her dad started bringing them here to Trinity because we were the only ones that still had a German service).

Anyway, Grandma grew up there on the Herman farm and though there were lots of chores that she and her siblings did it was just too much work to do without help. So, her father brought in a couple of hired workers one of which was your Grandpa, Elva's future husband, but at the time he was just Roy the farmhand which grandma would suspiciously sneak across the road to the cow barn to see even though it was against the rules.

Now, let's nevermind that grandma was far too young to be talking to no farm hands named Roy because as soon as she was eighteen they got married...or at least they would have if Roy hadn't been drafted and sent off to WWII.

Four years. Four years she waited. Four years she waited not knowing if today was the day death would put her hope to shame. Four years with just a few letters. Elva knew what it meant to have faith and wait in hope for her bridegroom's return.

It was hard to wait. It was hard to trust what her eyes couldn't see. It was hard to take comfort when she couldn't hug your grandpa, but her hope was not put to shame and in December of 1945 Roy had returned and they were married.

"I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"

The Church is the bride of Christ. Elva was brought into God's Church through the waters of Holy Baptism over 100 years ago. In this Baptism Jesus made her a promise that His death would pay for all her sins and that His resurrection victory would be her own. Jesus Promised to present her as His Holy bride without blemish or spot unto God His Father.

God kept that promise all the days of her life. He filled her with His Holy Spirit. He forgave her sins and fed her at His table. Jesus loves her, and yet there is one promise left. The promise we just read, the promise of Christ's return and an end to death and tears; the promise of loved ones raised to life everlasting.

It's hard to wait sometimes. It's hard to trust what our eyes can't see. It's hard to wait with just a few letters from God in this here Bible, but Elva waited on the Lord and she was not put to shame. Even in her last moments when the regal poise of the woman I knew had left her, when she no longer recognized my face, when she called out to God from her bed as I stroked her brow she was not put to shame. Even as death came for her Jesus kept his promise and death's victory was stolen. Elva, was not given over to this last indignity, but when death was closest, Jesus was closer and gathered his Bride unto himself and presents her even now as Holy and blameless at the throne of God the Father.

This Grace of God in Christ Jesus is for Elva, but it is also for each and every one of you. No matter what your age, your background, your sins, your hurts, your shames. Jesus Christ died to pay for your sins, and rose from the dead that your soul might live in heaven until your body is resurrected on the last day. It's hard to imagine that the angelic woman in a white pantsuit with her turquoise adornments could be a sinner in disguise, but there's a reason Elva came to Church and came to this altar until she physically was unable. She didn't do that to make Jesus love her. She didn't do it to stand on some moral high ground. She came here because she desperately needed Jesus, because Jesus loves her and gave her his pledge of forgiveness, life, and salvation through His very body and blood. She came because she wanted to be nowhere more than where she knew Jesus would be, and now, forever...in death, in life, in glory, wherever Jesus is, so shall Elva be.

"Alleluia! Christ is Risen!" - **he is risen indeed alleluia**

In Jesus name. Amen.