

## Dwelling in the Shelter of the Most High

At the Funeral of Larry Miskimen – 2/5/25  
Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
Text: Psalm 91 Pastor Keith Besel

- ✘ Helen, it wasn't all that long ago - only in the middle of November, that Larry went to the hospital, experiencing weakness in his legs. And now here we are, gathered in church with Larry's body before us, draped with a symbol of the righteousness that Jesus wrapped around Larry at his baptism.
  - ➔ It all happened so fast, didn't it? Sometimes death is like that. You're going through life, one day at a time, enjoying the company of the husband you've been with for 60 years and then this happens.
- ✘ It raises a lot of questions. It tears us apart; leaving a gaping hole in your life, because the one that God joined you together with into one flesh; the one with whom God blessed you to have a deep and profound love and companionship; a life filled with so much joy – the same man that wrote you all of those letters from the Philippines; that helped you raise your daughter Cynthia; the one who listened to you with such care and shared the same deep faith in Jesus as your Savior – he's no longer here physically with you anymore.
  - ➔ And that hurts. It hurts so much more than you can describe or even understand right now. Those of us who haven't been in your place before – we simply cannot grasp the grief that you are feeling right now, Helen.
- ✘ That's why death and grief is so deeply personal; so hard to face when it comes your way. But Helen, and anyone else here who may be in the throes of grief right now, I want to remind you that even when it feels like you are all alone in this struggle, you are not.
  - ➔ Yes, you have family and friends and fellow believers in Christ here with shoulders to cry on; with ears to listen; and with a readiness to help you in any way that they/we can. But much more than that, you have a loving Father who not only understands perfectly your deep grief, since His only Son was unjustly crucified, but remember, He is the one who knit you together in your mother's womb; who nurtured that relationship and life that you were blessed to have with Larry. In fact, His love for Larry and for you, Helen is so deep; so profound that He sent His Son, Jesus here to this earth to address the very thing that has brought us together today; the reason that Larry and all of us even have to die; because we all sin.
    - ➔ It's Ezekiel 18:20 that says, "The soul who sins shall die." But we Christians all know that Jesus took Larry's sin, along with yours and mine, upon Himself when He was brutally crucified, so that "whoever believes in Him", even though they die here on earth, as we see with Larry today, they "have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16).
- ✘ Still with all of that, God knows that you are hurting right now. And that's why He promises in this beautiful Psalm that Larry carried around in the pocket of his fatigues – in Psalm 91:4, that "He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler." In fact, in Hebrews 13:5-6 God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear.'"
- ✘ Though Larry was not necessarily a "big talker", one thing is for sure, he was not shy about his Christian faith. Especially in those last two months of his life, it became obvious to me, at least, why he carried Psalm 91 around in his pocket when he was overseas in the Air Force.

→ His was no superficial faith. He believed wholeheartedly in every word of Scripture, which meant that he, right along with you Helen, his bride, lived every day as verse one says, “in the shelter of the Most High”; “in the shadow of the Almighty.”

- ✘ I saw that truth displayed profoundly as Larry lost the ability to move his legs and his weakness continued to progress from there. He, as well as the doctors for a time, didn’t know what was happening to him. It really was like he found himself in that “snare” that verse three talks about. Yet every time I visited and talked with Larry, his faith and trust in God’s protection and promise to “deliver” him; to be “with him in trouble” (v.15) never wavered one bit.

→ That is how Larry, even here today, serves as a great witness for all of us now when we face the troubles that are before us.

- ✘ Listen again to verses 14-16 and the way that Larry and his unwavering faith in our gracious God can bring us great comfort today. God says, “<sup>14</sup> Because he (in this case, Larry) holds fast to Me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows My name. <sup>15</sup> When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. <sup>16</sup> With long life I will satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

→ I remember well the moment that God fulfilled every one of those promises to perfection. It was Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>. The weekend had been cold and snowy, but the sun was shining brightly just a bit after noon that day. Larry was resting calmly, no longer able to open his eyes. But when I arrived at his bed, I sensed a bit of an increase in his breathing – maybe an awareness that I was there talking to him, sharing some promises from God’s Word, like the Gospel Reading that “no one is able to snatch [Jesus’ sheep] out of [His] hand” (Jn. 10:28-29).

But then it seemed like his breathing was becoming much weaker again. The distance between breaths was increasing. So, I connected with Helen so that she could talk with Larry one last time. Helen, you shared your love for him; your appreciation for being such a great husband and partner in both life and faith and more. And eventually Helen, you told Larry, “Everything is ok. Now, you go to be with Jesus.” So I suggested that we pray the Lord’s Prayer together. And it was then, in the middle of the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray, that Larry took his last earthly breath; that God “answered him” as He promised in Psalm 91.

- ✘ I believe that was God’s gift of love and comfort Helen, both for you and for me that day, because it was at that point that the final words of our second reading in Revelation 21:6-7 became Larry’s eternal reality, where God said, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

→ That’s Larry’s life right now; partaking of the “spring of the water of life without payment.” Just like all of us here, as a sinner, Larry didn’t deserve God’s gift of salvation, nor could he earn or pay for it. But it is his, present tense, without question, because of Jesus!

- ✘ So, Helen, and the rest of you as Larry’s family and friends, I pray for God’s comfort in your grief. And I pray that the same confidence in trouble and the same joy in Jesus, that Larry had while he was here with us; that it will be your comfort; your confidence, and yes, your joy into eternity. Amen.