

I.N.I.

Funeral Delilah Riggert

May 26, 2012

Is. 43:1

In Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and Shepherd who leads us and calls us by our name, Dear Duane, children, grandchildren, other family members, and friends of our departed sister in Christ, Delilah,

Did you know that Delilah was peculiar, a peculiar person? I don't mean it in the sense of odd or strange, but in the sense of unique and special. Not only was her name unique, but so was she.

There are some people you meet in this world, that shortly thereafter you forget, but not Delilah. She had a heart as big as the prairies of Nebraska and as large as the open ranges of Wyoming. She had a grandiose personality. She had an opinion on ---just about everything and she made that known. She spoke openly as to what she felt and thought and loved to direct things and be in control---and for that we loved her. That is what made Delilah, Delilah. That is what made Delilah unique and special, special to all of us! I've also heard that she was quite a matchmaker!

But she was also special and unique to someone else, someone far more important. In I Peter 2:9 the King James version reads; **BUT YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, AN HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; THAT YE SHOULD SHOW FORTH THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT.** The phrase **PECULIAR PEOPLE** literally means "a people for a possession," or "a people that has become a possession."

Delilah was not only unique and special to you Duane as a loving wife, to you Becky, Julie and Niki as a loving and caring mother, or as a grandmother and a friend, but she was God's own, a special person of God. God owned her; she was a person belonging to God. She was peculiar, unique! What a blessing!

There is a story about a Sunday School teacher who after speaking to her class about the love of God, especially about how He showed His love by sending Jesus to be our Savior, asked the class this question. Why do you think God loves us all so very much?

There was a long, unbroken silence as each child thought hard for the right answer. Finally a little six year old raised her hand and ventured this answer; **BECAUSE HE HAS ONLY ONE OF EACH OF US?**

Does that sound like a childish answer, the naive reply of a kindergartner? It may seem so at first, but beneath those words lies a theological truth, which the word **PECULIAR** brings forth, and which our text this morning clearly lays before us--a truth which the more we ponder it, the more it gives a deeper meaning to your life and to mine as it did to Delilah's life. God loves us all so very much "**BECAUSE HE HAS ONLY ONE OF EACH OF US.**"

Each one of us is precious and dear in our Father's eyes. Each one of us is unique to Him, His own very special possession. **WHY?** Surely not because we are special of ourselves, or because there is some inherent, exceptionally good quality in us that makes God love us so much, so that we deserve His love. **NO!** It is because we are God's creatures. He made us!

Our text begins with the words; **BUT NOW, THUS SAYS THE LORD, WHO CREATED YOU, O JACOB, AND HE WHO FORMED YOU, O ISRAEL.** These words had their first application to the Israelites of Isaiah's day. They were words of comfort after words of rebuke in chapter 42 for their many failures in obeying the LORD.

But the words of our Lord in Isaiah, especially in the second half of his prophecy are words of

comfort, peace and pardon in the Messiah's name. These words applied to the Israelites many years ago, but today the Lord is using them to apply to our hearts as well. So, thus says the Lord who created Delilah and who formed Delilah and who created you and formed you:

**DO NOT BE AFRAID! FEAR NOT!**

This world is full of things that can make us fearful. One of the greatest is death. It is final! It is irreversible! It is universal! It is inevitable! Death has taken your dear wife, loving mother and grandmother and our dear friend. And death will take all of us someday if Jesus does not come first. This could cause us to tremble and shake with fear. But our Lord comes to us this morning with the comforting words; **FEAR NOT! DO NOT BE AFRAID!**

**"For I who created you, I who formed you in the womb before your parents even knew you; I HAVE ALSO REDEEMED YOU."**

That not only is our comfort, it was Delilah's as well. Delilah was redeemed, she was **BOUGHT BACK!** The Holy Spirit brought her to the heart knowledge of that truth. She knew that she had been "ransomed," "been atoned for" with Christ's shed blood. The Lord bought her to be His own again!

Already in eternity, God loved her so much that He planned to send His Son into this world as a human being, just like you and me, but without sin. His plan was for His Son to keep the Law perfectly for all of us lost and condemned sinners and then to take that perfect, holy life and sacrifice Himself as full payment for the guilt and punishment of Delilah's sins and for all of our sins. In time God promised that redemption to mankind. First to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when they fell into sin, and then on down through the many generations through His prophets, until the fullness of time had come when God's Son was born of the woman, the virgin Mary.

Almost 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ, the God-Man loved Delilah so much that He willingly went to the cross, and gave His life for her. Three days later, as we have recently celebrated, He rose again from the dead assuring Delilah and all of us, who believe in Him, of our resurrection, of our forgiveness and of our victory over our enemies. He also Ascended where He now rules over all things, intercedes for us and assures us of our ascension into heavenly glory.

We need not **FEAR** our past of sin with its guilt and punishment. Our sin's debt is paid for in full!

We need not **FEAR** Satan for he has been defeated and chained with the Good News of Christ's sacrifice.

We need not **FEAR** death for Christ has destroyed death through His resurrection and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

We need not **FEAR** hell and damnation for Christ suffered it for us, was damned on our behalf and has now earned for us eternal life.

We need not **FEAR** the future, for it is as secure as our past life in Christ has been. The Lord Jesus rules over all things for the eternal welfare of His children.

That was Delilah's assurance--Her past forgiven, her future assured in Christ!

But the LORD through Isaiah says more, **I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME!**

In the Third article we state that **THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS CALLED ME BY THE GOSPEL...** It was in this same way of conversion, being spiritually born again, that Christ called Delilah by her name. She became one of His sheep. She was called out from the rest of the unbelieving world, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and lived as God's child.

Even as a loving shepherd knows each of his sheep so well that many times he gives names to them, so also our Good Shepherd knew Delilah and knows each of us by name. He knows our personalities, our desires, our needs, our worries and our cares. He knows that we are but dust and ashes by nature, that we are weak, frail sinful human beings, that we are defenseless sheep. That is why He makes this close relationship with us, so that we are not afraid, so that we have the confidence in knowing that our

Good Shepherd already laid down His life for me. How will He not also keep me, guide me and protect me in all my ways?

If you believe in Jesus, the Lord through the Holy Spirit has called you by name, invited you through His Gospel and in that same Gospel gave to you the faith to believe in Him as your Redeemer and Savior.

The last assurance the Lord lays on your hearts this morning is this: **YOU ARE MINE!** Delilah was the Lord's exclusive, special, peculiar, unique possession. This came about solely by the Lord's undeserved love. So that the Lord God looked upon her, as one of His redeemed children, as His greatest treasure and spared nothing, not even His only-begotten beloved Son, for her and for her eternal welfare.

What a humbling thought. The only way that Delilah, or any of us miserable sinful creatures could even approach our God is through our Substitute; our Scapegoat, the Lamb who has washed us clean. May the full realization of what we were by nature and of what our Savior has done for us remain in us a constant humbling reminder of God's wonderful grace in Christ.

Delilah showed that humbleness when she fervently desired the blessed assurance of her forgiveness through her participation in the Lord's Supper. She so appreciated those private visits and devotions that directed her heart to her Lord and Savior and away from the sufferings and pains of life.

We read verses 2-3: **WHEN YOU PASS THROUGH THE WATERS, I WILL BE WITH YOU; AND THROUGH THE RIVERS, THEY SHALL NOT OVERFLOW YOU. WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE FIRE, YOU SHALL NOT BE BURNED, NOR SHALL THE FLAME SCORCH YOU. FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, YOUR SAVIOR.**

In the last few years Delilah indeed passed through many waters of pain and suffering. She endured the fire of pulmonary illness and declining health. She labored to take the next breath. But through all of that the Lord was true to His Word—He was with her every day; He did not let this illness overwhelm her; her faith was not burned or scorched but instead through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word her faith was strengthened and made even more secure in Christ.

I remember after having sung the hymn “I Am Content! My Jesus Liveth Still,” Delilah said with shortened breath “I am content!” And she was, but now she is perfectly content!

On Monday, about an hour before Delilah died, she asked two questions. “Where is Julie?” Julie had stepped out and was due back soon. A few moments later she asked “Where is Jesus?” I said that He was in her heart watching over and caring for her. Little did we know that He was closer than that. That within the hour He would send His angels to take Delilah's soul to be with Him forever.

Even as Delilah was precious to her Savior, her Savior-God's Words were precious to her. May these words of our text which describe for us the indestructible relationship of love that once and for all times has been established between the Lord and His people also strengthen and preserve you in this faith until we stand together with Delilah, praising our Triune God, face to face with our Savior in our heavenly home.

Until that blessed day of the resurrection of all flesh may the Holy Spirit continue to lead us to daily repentance of our sins and a blessed assurance of forgiveness in Jesus Christ so that we can, from a heart of confident faith proclaim and sing the words of the hymn based on our text—

Let us join in singing Hymn 427 vs. 3-7