

✘ Numbers 6:22-27 ✘

IN NOMINE IESU

What shall we say to these things? What shall we say to this sudden and tragic death? What shall we say to those who mourn and grieve? What shall we say to these things? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth, all things visible and invisible. Your heavenly Father created you. He has given to you your body and soul, your eyes and ears and all your members, your reason and all your senses, and He still preserves you. Just as He created Robert, giving him his body and soul, his arms, his mind, his personality, and still preserves him.

Your heavenly Father defends you from all danger and guards and protects you from all evil. Just as He does for Robert. All this He does only out of Fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in you, or in Robert. For all this it is your duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. Just like Robert. This is most certainly true.

You may have illness and disease, pain and heartache, or you may have the heart-wrenching task of burying your loved one who you were not yet ready to let go, but God does not lie. It was true years ago when Robert lost his arm, and later when he suffered a stroke, and it remains true to him even now, as it is true for you. Your heavenly Father preserves you from all danger and guards and protects you from all evil.

What then shall we say to these things? What shall we say to heart-ache and mind-numbing sorrow? What shall we say to the guilt we feel? What shall we say to all these things?

We shall say that if God is for us, who can be against us? It is God who justifies, who is there to condemn us? It is Christ Jesus who died, more than that, who was raised from the dead and is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding on your behalf. What shall separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus? Death? No. For our Lord submitted Himself to the pains and evil of death and suffer so that you and Robert would live. Though we are sheep as unto the slaughter, we are indeed conquerors through Jesus who loves us. Nothing, not angels or demons, powers or rulers, or even death itself, shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

For the Lord blesses you and keeps you. He does not bless you like man bless, saying that we hope things will go well, that we hope life will get better, that it will all be alright. Things are not going well, life is unbearably difficult, things are not right. No, God blesses you as only God can bless you, by writing His name upon your heart and making you His own. By bringing you as little children to Himself and blessing you, fulfilling the Word of the Lord that He shall put His name upon His children and shall bless them.

This is not a fancy turn of phrase; it is the very real, ever-present reality and comfort that we who are baptized belong to God, just as Robert belongs to God. The Lord Jesus has redeemed you and Robert, purchased and won you from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, in order that you would belong to Him. That is why He suffered and died, so that you would belong to Him.

And so He will keep you. He will not let the devil or the devil's stinking henchmen of death and sorrow and pain and suffering have you. The Lord will keep you. For He has promised that He will not let His Holy One see decay. And you and Robert, and all who have been baptized into Christ, are intricately and inseparably bound to Jesus, the Holy One of God, who did not see decay but on the third day rose from the dead, breaking the bonds of death; who has inscribed His name upon your forehead and upon your heart with the ink of His blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Washed in the holy waters of Baptism and made a child of God who is the God of the living, not the dead, Robert frequented the Sacrament, eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ His Savior, given to Him by His heavenly Father for the purposes of renewing Robert, body and soul, and incorporating Him into the mystical body of Christ. God keeps Robert as He keeps you. Not as we would, but only as God can. He keeps You in His Son, Jesus.

It is not that all Robert did was good; it is not that we are good; it is that Jesus is good. He is your righteousness. He makes you a holy one of God. And God will not let His holy ones see destruction. On the Last Day God will raise Robert and all those who have departed with Christ, and will be given eternal life in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Thus is the Lord gracious to you. Not as men count grace. Men would have grace to be that things always go their way, that life be easy and compliment their wants and desires. Men want grace to be nothing more than winning the lottery or watching their favorite team win the game, and to never have to suffer. But God's grace is sufficient for you. And by His grace, He works all things to draw you closer to Himself. His grace is not measurable. Your cup runneth over. If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give to you the Holy Spirit? He is gracious to you. He does not count your sin against you. He does not seek to exact revenge on you. He forgives you.

He loves you and loves to be gracious to you. He loves reconciling you to Himself. He loves giving to you the body and blood of His Son. He loves hearing your prayers. He loves watching you like a father loves to watch his son. He delights in you just as He delights in Robert. And so He makes His face to shine upon you.

He draws your attention so that you gaze upon Him who gives you life, crafting and shaping you so that you are remade into the image of His beloved Son, Jesus. This is the work of a loving God, who cares for you and guards and protects you from all evil; who makes His face to shine upon you, lifting His countenance upon you so that you bask in the wonder of His love.

And this is God's love: that He gave His only-begotten Son to suffer and die on the cross that you, that Robert, should not perish but have everlasting life. And in this, the Lord gives you peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. I am going to prepare a place for you, and if I go I will return to take you to where I am." The peace of the Lord be with you always.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠