

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His Saints-Psalm 116:15 September 20, 2020

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this day is taken from Psalm 116 and we read the fifteenth verse, **“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”**. So far, the text.

We pray: Dear God, our heavenly Father, give us and renew in us a love for Your Word. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

My fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus.

As we gather together in the house of our God, as Fall comes upon us, we gather to worship Him, to give Him praise. We come to hear His Word by which through the gracious working of God the Holy Spirit, we have come to know, to believe and to confess Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior. As we gather, we also pray for one another, for those who are sick and ill, for the spread of the Gospel at home and throughout the world, yes, we pray for the needs of all people.

Over this summer now drawing to a close, we have used the Psalms at the basis of meditations here at Resurrection. As we studied those portions of God’s inspired Word, we have had opportunity to learn much about our God and Lord. We have also learned of His love, compassion and mercy toward us and all people. Through this study of His Word our God would have us to grow in our faith, in our trust in Him, so that we might live to His glory now in time and live to His glory as we contemplate, look forward to eternal life with Him.

May God the Holy Spirit, then, bless our study of His Word as consider the words of the Psalmist, **“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints”** (Ps. 116:15)

My fellow redeemed; we see a contrast here, do we not. The psalmist uses the word “precious” which means that something is of great value; priceless, irreplaceable; it is something that one would protect, secure, watch over.

But we also see in this fallen, broken, sinful world that...Life can be pretty cheap

We cheapen life, human life, with legalized abortion again looking at it as a solution to a problem. Abortion is not expensive, in fact most forms of abortion are cheap. Moreover, many rationalize abortion by thinking that the child is no larger than tip of a pencil, so what difference does it make.

We cheapen life, human life, when public schools, colleges, and universities teach and when we ourselves buy into the theory of evolution and teach that human life came about by accident, over vast stretches of time, instead of trusting what God

has told in His Word. With evolution man is no longer the crown of God's creation, but simply the highest form of life at this point in time. With the theory of evolution man, you, and I, are not accountable to anyone. Yes, the hardened evolutionist would shake his fist at the God of the Bible, and would sneeringly say, *"You have to be kidding! No one, not you is going tell me what I can do or not do."*

We cheapen life, human life, when we do not visit or call that family member or friend who needs to hear a word of encouragement, who needs some help because we think we are just too busy

We cheapen life-human life-when in much smaller ways such as poor stewardship and misplaced priorities of time.

Yes, in this fallen, broken, sinful world that life, human life, can be pretty cheap

In the midst of all that, here comes the minority voice: In Psalm 116:15, the psalmist reminds us. **"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"** (Ps. 116:15). Not just our lives, but even our deaths are precious to our Lord!

When something is precious to us, we guard it and take care of it. We do not leave it insecure, and vulnerable. We know where it is at all times. We are not going to let it be stolen away.

In this way our lives, even our deaths are precious in the sight of the Lord. He guards us, takes care of us, does not leave us unattended. Our gracious, merciful God knows at all times where we are, and He is with us even in our weakness. He is not going to let us be snatched from His hand. Like a Shepherd, He watches over His flock always, because He is not a part-time shepherd, yes, our lives are precious to Him.

And even when one of us is dying our God of all mercy and grace is vigilant and protective then too, because our deaths are precious to Him.

Death is no trifling matter to the Lord. He does not lightly suffer it, allow it, to come about. He does not barter with our life like a pawn on a chess board, or like a general feeling the pressure to engage the enemy before the onset of winter. No, our life, our death is precious to Him. Moreover, we must remember that when it happens, it will not be accidental or random or outside of His knowledge or control. From Psalm 139, we learn, **"All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be"** (v.16).

A number of times I have been with Christian people as they have died. Please do not take this wrong, but I have always felt privileged to have been there. It is a moment belonging to God, a moment important to our God, because **"precious in His sight is the death of His saints."** It is holy ground, because He is there in all His goodness and grace, watching, holding, keeping, and supporting.

Think of it this way. It is probably easier for you and me to see our own blood, than it is for you or me to see our child bleeding from say, a gash in the leg. That is the way it is for the Lord! The psalmist reminds us in Psalm 72:14, "**Precious is their blood in His sight.**" Think of it: At the time of our Lord's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, shortly before our Savior would lay down His life on the cross, our Lord stopped the bleeding of the guard's ear. However, our Redeemer, did not stop His own bleeding. Such is His love for us, for all people, that it was easier for Jesus to see His own blood on the cross, than it was to see the blood of you or me.

When we lose blood, or give blood, we normally get thirsty. From that cross on that Good Friday, Jesus said, "**I thirst.**" A jar of sour wine was there, so, in a small act of kindness and compassion, a Roman soldier soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it up to Jesus' lips. When He received the drink, John says, Jesus said, "**It is finished**" and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. (John 19: 28-30)

Many times, I have been with people who were so sick, so helpless, that they could not hold a cup of water or drink from a straw. All they could do was open their lips a little to receive moisture from a little sponge on a stick.

So closely Jesus identifies with us that He experienced firsthand this extreme helplessness before death. As true man and true God, Jesus did not "cheat" when it came to His death on the cross. He did not use His divine powers to make it any easier. All our Lord could do was open His lips a little and receive a bit of moisture from a sponge on a stick.

The Son of God knew extreme humility. He knew extreme helplessness. He could not do anything. He knew extreme weakness and pain. Our Savior who had helped so many others because their lives were precious to Him, could not now, help Himself. Why? Because our lives are precious to Him too. That is why He was there on that accursed cross, on Golgotha hill to redeem our lives. Sin and death, Satan and hell owned us lock, stock and barrel. But on the cross, Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven, the guilt might be cancelled, the debt paid. And Jesus arose triumphant, victorious from the grave on the third day, so we could live eternally with Him. Our Lord and Savior did that because life, our life is precious to Him.

On earth, life and death can become pretty cheap. Not so with the Lord.

The woman who is dying of stage four cancer, she remains the apple of His eye.

That man who was never easy to love when young and healthy, and even less so when now old and in constant pain, is still precious in the sight of the Lord.

The one who has outlived the love of his friends and family members has not outlived the love of his Lord.

The sinner who pretended God was not watching, or did not care that much, but as that sinner now lies dying, God is watching, and does care passionately, because He still loves and wants to save that blood bought soul.

Our gracious God and Lord numbers our days, (Psalm 90: 12) and they are precious to Him, also the last one. That day, the day of our death, that is so profound and impactful and imposing to us . . . it is important to Him too. It is holy ground around the death bed. It belongs to Him. Our gracious God and Lord is there, leaning in, watching, comforting. He is there, holding us and keeping us in the arms of His love, **because precious in His sight is the death of His saints.**

And as, **precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints**, just think of what God has prepared and is preparing for His saints, to those who are His favored ones. Just try to imagine of what God is making ready for us and for all His children so that we might be with Him in eternity, in heaven's eternal day.

God, our God in His wondrous ways gives us a glimpse, if you will, of what heaven will be like. He does this in His inspired, inerrant Word, so by these portions of the Holy Scripture we might be encouraged to persevere, to hold on to our confession of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, as Paul encouraged Timothy, his son in the faith, **"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses"** (I Timothy 6:12).

What are some of the things which God has told us in His Word about heaven, about eternity? The following are but a few.

There we will see God face to face. The Apostle John, in the book of Revelation, the last book of Holy Scripture tells us, **"They (the believers) shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads."** (Revelation 22: 4)

We are also told that there will be no more sorrow, death or crying for the former things are passed away. Those who died in the Lord will be before the throne of God and serve Him and that the Lamb who is the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water (Revelation 7: 15-17).

There we will behold multitude upon multitude from all tribes, peoples, and tongues. In Revelation 7 we are told, **"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"**" (Revelation 7: 9-10)

There we will worship Him with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven forevermore. (Revelation 7: 11-12)

Yes, **precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints**. For the Christian, for the child of God death is but the gateway to life, to life eternal in the mansions of the Father, a glorious homecoming to the Triune God who loved us. And what a homecoming it will be...

It will be a glorious homecoming to the God and Father who created us, who preserved us and sent His only begotten Son to save us.

It will be a glorious homecoming to the God the Son, true God and true man who by His holy perfect life, His innocent suffering and death, atoned for the sins of the world, who reconciled God and man, and it will be

... the glorious homecoming to the Holy Spirit who through Word and Sacrament called us to saving faith in Christ Jesus, so that through His gracious work we now confess, we now believe in Christ Jesus.

My fellow redeemed, on this earth life is pretty cheap....

But thanks be to God, He looks at us differently. He sees us as precious in His sight, He sees us as His favored ones.

May we in this life realize more and more that we are precious in His sight.

May we know that, confess that we are precious in His sight in the hour of our death.

For then there in heaven's eternal day we will by His grace, behold Him our Lord and God. And may God, our God, grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.