

SERMON 913

February 6, 2015

Burial Office for Rachel Davis

983rd Week as Priest

810th Week at St Dunstan's

75th Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

WITH THE SAINTS IN LIGHT

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

One of the great blessings of growing up in Auburn, graduating from Auburn, and coming back to Auburn sixteen years ago, is that I have known many wonderful people who have been a part of our Loveliest Village just about my whole life. There have been many changes, to be sure, over the past six decades—but many things about this remarkable place have stayed the same. We love Auburn and believe in it.

I have been a witness to much that has been true and beautiful and good, and I believe it is important to celebrate that truth, that beauty, that goodness—and to speak of these things that we all remember and reflect upon the blessings of life—our families, friends, neighborhoods, churches, and places of learning.

There is a saying from the Prayer Book that rings true, however. “In the midst of life, we are in death.” It is an acknowledgement that our days and years are measured out in joys and sorrows, triumphs and tragedies, health and illness—and none of us is guaranteed a long and happy life, a peaceful night and a perfect end.

But what we believe as Christians is that our Lord has overcome sin and conquered death. Paul told the Romans just as much:

I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is not a superficial or sentimental understanding; it is the very bone and sinew of our being. We are people of hope, “a sure and certain hope” as the Prayer Book says, and hope does not disappoint us.

If you look carefully and pay close attention to the natural world, to the cycle of seasons, the changes that occur over time, and continue to occur year after year, you see that all things are being made new. There is

death, and there is resurrection. The evidence is all around us.

The dead of winter is coming to a close once again, and before you know it, we will welcome the arrival of jonquils, and blooming redbud trees, dogwoods, and azaleas of liturgical colors—red, purple, and white—and of green grass and blue skies and what the English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins called “the deep down freshness of things.” Nature is never spent, he said, and “the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”

We see this evidence of death and resurrection in our own lives, as well. Rachel Davis held on to life with her sense of humor and her sharp mind, just long enough to hear of the birth of her newest great-grandchild. Rachel Elizabeth Parker was born on the twenty-first of January, and two weeks to the day, Rachel Davis passed into the larger life of heaven.

Rachel Davis has died. At the end of a long and loving life, she lives now with the saints in light. She stands with the company of heaven in the presence of the Lamb, where there is no more pain or sorrow. This is our sure and certain hope—and not only for Rachel Davis, but for all who have loved the Lord Jesus and

patterned their lives after his holy example. I believe that you and I will one day be with them, a multitude of saints more than anyone could number. So let us live with joy and a strong sense of purpose. Let us commit ourselves, our souls and bodies, to the way and the truth and the life found in Christ Jesus. **AMEN.**