

### 26.3.2020 FUNERAL SERMON FOR PASTOR PAUL ALBERS MATTHEW 28:16-20

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God's call on Paul's life was his motivation and inspiration. God's call is what Paul looked up to continually. God's call to Paul began on the seventh of August, 1924, the day he was baptised in God's name at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Golden, Illinois, by Pastor J. M. Johnson. God's call to Paul for the Ministry of God's Word and Sacraments began with Paul looking up to the mentoring and soul care of his pastor, his godly father and grandfather who opened up the way for Paul to study at a Christian University, Wartburg College. It was at the Wartburg Seminary where Paul's call to world mission became very strong when he looked up to the stained glass windows above the altar to see the disciples looking up to Jesus as he was commissioning them with these words: *All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" (Mtt. 28:18-20). From this point on, Paul's heart burnt for mission. He felt as though he was one of those disciples who looked up to Jesus and was sent by Jesus into the whole world. Indeed, the world was his parish. Throughout his life, Paul "looked up" to the Lord. In fact one Paul's "trademark responses" in conversation and devotion was the way he would point his finger upwards to God. One of Paul's favourite hymns was, "My faith Looks Up to Thee, O Lamb of Calvary" I am reminded of John the Baptist who pointed to Jesus saying, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (Jon 3:30).

"Paul" is very appropriate name because he shared with the apostle Paul a great heart for mission to all nations and as it turned out this included the Gentile nation of Australia. "Paul" actually means "humble" or "small", but Paul had a big heart which looked up to a big God. Paul's desire for mission was expressed earlier in his life through street mission in Chicago.

After getting to know his beloved Erna when he was studying at university in Iowa, they were married and two weeks later, Paul was sent to Schapville, Illinois, his first parish and then Bloomfield, Iowa, where he was on home field mission door knocking the whole city for a whole year until he had enough members to build a bungalow church.

Paul continued to look up to God in home mission when his call for world mission was confirmed with what he considered to be “the Macedonian Call” from Acts 16, although it was actually the Australian call. There was a magazine called the Standard in which the President of the United Evangelical Church of Australia, Dr. Max Lohe, had written an article about the need for pastors to serve in mission parishes of Australia. For some reason Erna got to this article before Paul did, and you know what she did – she hid it. But she did not hide it well enough because the Lord led her husband to find the Standard and to read the article and his life and her life were never the same. Paul travelled by with Erna, Mark and Tim, all the way all the way across the seas to Australia and ended up in Adelaide and then to Angaston to serve as a mission pastor. When Paul looked up to Jesus to follow him as his disciple in mission he was willing to go anywhere and he knew and Erna knew that this call to worldwide mission was a lifelong call and so they were leaving behind their life in the US. Looking up to the Lord’s call in this way meant no turning back to look behind.

One of Paul’s favourite hymns was

*“I’ll go wherever you want me to go, dear Lord,*

*O’er mountain, or plain, or sea;*

*I’ll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,*

*I’ll be what you want me to be”*

Paul then served the Lord in Walla Walla , Townsville, Highfields Toowoomba, Carlesruhe, Mannum and Loxton. As far as I am aware, Paul never declined a call. He was willing to go wherever the Lord wanted him to go.

There was a continual sense of urgency in Paul's life and ministry as he looked up to the Lord. I believe this came from an experience he had when he was door knocking in Chicago. A man came up to him and simply said, "Jesus is coming soon!" Paul tried to find the man afterwards, but he was gone. Paul believed this was an angel. Jesus is coming again and there is no time to waste. A sense of immanency of Jesus' second coming pervaded Pauls' life and Ministry so that he lived each day as though "Christ died yesterday, rose today and is coming again tomorrow".

Motivated with sense of urgency, Paul was always prepared and the greatest preparation occurred in prayer. Paul was a man of prayer. By the grace of God, Paul got up at 4.00am every morning to pray for others. It is so fitting that Paul's confirmation text is Matthew 26:41: "*Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial*" Paul "stayed awake and prayed" systematically went through the LCA Church Yearbook and prayed for each pastor and their family. I had the privilege of praying with Paul every Thursday morning at Loxton. It was such a great support. It was also a special honour to be one of Pauls' pastors here at Hope Valley.

Approximately eight years ago, Paul came to me and shared that the Lord had put it on his heart to start a prayer group in the village community. So we put the invitation out to the community and Christians from the community gathered together to meet in his home, and this prayer group is still meeting to this day.

This sense of urgency to always be prepared for the coming of the Lord, impacted Paul's life to keep in motion praying and walking. He walked everywhere. I remember seeing him walking the streets of Loxton regularly. He became well known by sight in the community. You could set your watch by him! He gave out tracts and he wrote a tract, "Peace Like a River". Since Paul was always motivated by mission, he was always on time. In the entire time of knowing Paul, he was never ever late, and he was never, ever on time. He was **always** early! I am sure that as he would wait for the next commitment to start that he did not waste that time, for he was praying. I remember once commending Paul on how very prompt he was to everything. "*The early bird gets the worm*" was his response. If this is true, Paul had a sumptuous feast which began very early every morning!

I have such respect and admiration for Paul as mentor and spiritual father in the faith. Even when Paul's eyesight, hearing and mobility began to fail, he continued to look up to God in prayer.

He would also continue to point his finger up to God the Lord whom he looked up to and encouraged others to look up to. There were times when Paul wanted to do things faster and got impatient. He was very much aware of his own failings and that he was sinner saved by the grace of God alone.

One thing which stands out to me is something he said to me when we were in Loxton after he and Erna so graciously hosted a meal with Andrea and I. After the meal Paul took me aside and said, "When I am with the Lord in heaven I want to be able to say to him, *"Here I am and the children whom God has given me"* (Hebrews 2:13). These are words from the book of Hebrews referring to the children of God who are with Jesus in heaven. Paul prayed and longed that all whom the Lord brought before him including his own children would become children of God. For like Paul, children are those who teach us to "look up" in faith. Even now, and especially now in our grief, may we all "look up" to God who has come down to us through His Son who has died and risen and ascended for us and for the whole world.

Amen.

Pastor Chris Gallasch