

Daily Devotional, November 30, 2021 Waiting in Great Expectation

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (NIV)

I can't tell you how many times I have read over these words before walking into a hospital room to pray with those who are approaching their last days on earth, or the number of times I have discussed these words with a family before they say goodbye to a loved one. I also cannot count the number of times that these words have come to me in the wee hours of the morning or night when I have awakened with thoughts of someone whom the Lord has placed upon my heart. These words are some of those I try to hold in my mind each day as I look toward the promise that this life is not all we know.

However, holding onto these words in my heart and mind daily may not always work in the ways I would desire them to. While I seek not to "grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope," I continue to have moments in my life when it grieves me to think of those who have gone on to be with the Lord, who I truly miss. I also find myself at times, trapped in what is called "anticipatory grief," a time when I see someone I love approaching the end of their earthly life. The hope I find in this passage is not necessarily one that will wipe away every tear from my eye, however, this hope does remind me that a day is coming when we will never know a single moment of grief. The phrase "the dead in Christ will rise first" continues to echo in my mind on those days, and I look toward to that glorious moment when our hearts will be filled with boundless joy! What a glorious day that will be!

Prayer: Most gracious and ever-living God, though we do not know the time or the day, we find ourselves awaiting the arrival of Your kingdom, and we look to You with hope and expectation. We yearn for the day when we will be with you forever and will know the joy of seeing you face to face. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.