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✝ I preach in God's name for God's people. Let my words be from God and for God's people. **Amen**

Good morning.

We are gathered here to remember Debbie, to honor her life, to mourn with Irv and her children and her family. Now is the time to weep and to mourn.

Yet we have gathered together here, specifically here in this sanctuary, among this congregation, because Debbie believed the promise that the Lord Jesus has made — the promise which gives great expectation and hope.

*14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.*

Why does Jesus tell his disciples that their hearts need not be troubled?

Jesus speaks these words to his disciples during their final moments together, during their final meal — that meal we have come to know as the *Last Supper*. Jesus was preparing them for what was coming — his betrayal that evening by one of them, his suffering through the night and day, and his death. The whole of Jesus' life & ministry had led to this moment — was leading to his death on the cross.

As his death rapidly approached, what is the main thing that Jesus wants his disciples to know? He knows they will mourn. He knows they will be troubled. But the main thing Jesus wants his twelve disciples to know is *himself*. He wants them to know that he is the source of their consolation, their comfort, and their hope.

*2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

How could Jesus, going to his death, promise to prepare a place for his disciples? If anyone other than Jesus had made this promise we could be sure they were delusional. No one else could have made such a promise; no one else had the power to make such a promise come true. Indeed, the disciples themselves did not take any of this to heart until the resurrection, until they saw Jesus again, alive, in person.

And they did see him, for Jesus rose from the dead.

Then everything changed — for them, for us, for everyone, for all time. Death could not keep Jesus. This is the good news.

His eleven disciples—the ones who abandoned him at his trial and at the cross—suffered immensely — ten of them killed for it — in order to tell the news of his death, his resurrection, his ascension — his life story. And indeed, this news spread, first throughout Jerusalem, then Judea, then to the ends of the earth. It is this news that many of us here have heard, and have believed, like Debbie.

It's the news that Jesus poured himself out in death for us, so that he might defeat death, and offer life — unending life — to all who put their hope in him. Debbie is one of those who put her hope in Jesus.

She believed what we confess in the creed. She believed that Christ will come again, to judge the living and the dead, and to raise the dead to new life.

Death need not be the end for any one of us here, because death was not the end for Jesus.

*4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:  
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

Jesus walked through the valley of the shadow of death — in the garden, on the hill, on the cross, and then in the grave — so that all those who put their hope in Jesus will not remain dead, but will be raised from the dead, just as Jesus was.

The end of all death — and with death, the end of suffering, of sin, of evil— is the great gift of Jesus — the gift we are sure of because of his resurrection.

Not one of us will see or hear or speak with Debbie again on this side of the grave. We will hold memories of her. We may even see signs of her, perhaps in dreams or in things we know she loved.

Our Lord's Last Supper with his disciples was not actually the last meal they shared together, nor the last time they saw each other, nor the last time they spent time together. For Jesus appeared to them again; spoke with them again; spent time with them again. Jesus broke bread with them again and ate with them again.

So, too, whatever your last words were with Debbie will not be your last words with Debbie. So, too, whatever your last time with Debbie was will not be the last time you see Debbie, hear Debbie, or spend time with Debbie.

As certain as it is that Debbie has now died, is as certain as it is that Debbie will be raised from the dead.

The afflictions Debbie suffered in these last years are now over; she is — as the New Testament puts it — asleep in the Lord. The afflictions which plagued her mind and body no longer have any power over her.

She will be raised to a new and glorious body — still completely herself, yet also new, somehow even more herself. Every single one of us who joins Debbie in placing our hope in Jesus will see Debbie *alive* again. Though we die, yet shall we all live.

This is the hope that Christians have because of Christ's own death & resurrection. He has power over life and death.

And indeed, when we reflect, we see that this has always been what would be true — for God created the cosmos, created man and woman for the cosmos, created us *to live*. Of course he was going to pour himself out — pour out his infinite, unbounded, immeasurable life — that we may *live again* — and this time, without the fear of death.

The one who has promised these things is Goodness himself, Love embodied — our Lord Jesus — the very one who poured all of himself out for us in death, so that death cannot be the end.

*2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

Our Lord Jesus is preparing a place for all those who put their hope in him. The place he has made for Debbie is now finished, complete, perfect, and ready for her.

But he is still at work preparing those places to be ready for all who will join Debbie and all the saints who have gone before — saints who have now entered into glory.

Now is the time to weep and to mourn. But do not let your hearts *remain* troubled.

For as surely as Jesus has been raised, so, too, Debbie shall be raised from the dead, enter into glory, and dwell with the Lord and his saints forevermore.

*6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

**✠ All Glory be to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen.**