

TEXT: Psalm 31:14-15a, 24

THEME: OUR TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS

Dear Marge, Family, and Friends of our dear departed Brother, John Obertein:

The word of God chosen for our comfort today is written in Psalm 31, a psalm of David: **But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hands;...Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.**

People have often described our life on this earth like the seasons of the year. Springtime is childhood with all its promises of good things to come. Summer is the time of young adulthood with all its exuberance and thoughts of anything being possible. Autumn is the time of maturity and reaping the harvest of a lifetime of work. Winter is the time of aging, aches and pains, of being shut-in, cold and lonely.

At age 95, John had certainly experienced all those seasons of life. He was born at the beginning of the last year of WWI. He worked as a mechanic and loved the heat of summer—the hotter the better for him. For over 60 years he and Marge lived in their beautiful home on the Middle Grounds and he enjoyed his autumn years there working in the yard. Then came the winter of his life and the loss of hearing, sight, mobility, and health. He had to leave his home and live at nursing care facility, a move that he accepted as necessary, even though it was not what he wanted. John was the oldest male member of our Trinity church family. Although John didn't seem to be too impressed with that; when I mentioned it to him a couple years ago, he simply said, “Well, I'm old.”

Now John's winter has ended through death. All living things must die. The Scriptures say: **“What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14).** There is sadness in death, a sense of loss and loneliness. But the death of a Christian, like John, also highlights the victory of Jesus and our victory through faith in him. After living a perfectly holy life in our place, Jesus died to pay for our sins. But he didn't stay dead. On the third day he rose from the dead to assure us that God the Father had accepted his payment for our sins. Jesus said, **“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!” (Revelation 1:18).** Jesus' death and resurrection defeated the power of sin to separate us from the love of the Father and destroyed the grave's power to keep us forever in the

darkness. The apostle Paul understood that and exclaimed: **“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).**

The good news is that Jesus is here for us through all the seasons of life. John was a life-long Christian. Jesus was with him every step of the way through this life, through every changing season. John was at peace because he trusted the promises of his Savior, Jesus, who said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).**

Jesus was the man, the God-man, for all the seasons of John’s long life. Jesus is the man, the God-man, for all the seasons of your life too, whether you meet joy or sorrow. Love him, serve him, trust him, worship him. Find comfort for your souls in his presence and his enduring promises.

The great British leader, Winston Churchill, had planned his own funeral. He included many of the great Christian hymns and an eloquent liturgy. At his direction, after the benediction, a bugler intoned the sound of *Taps*, the universal signal that says the day is finished. But then came a most dramatic twist. Churchill instructed that as soon as *Taps* was finished, another bugler, on the other side of the cathedral, should play *Reveille*: “It’s time to get up! It’s time to get up! It’s time to get up in the morning.” This was Churchill’s testimony, at his own funeral, that he believed in the resurrection, that he believed our Savior’s promise: **“Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).**

Today, in our hearts, we may be playing *Taps* for John. Yet, in heaven, it would be fitting for *Reveille* to be playing for John. A new season has begun for John, the season of eternity, the season of being with his Savior-God, a season that will never end. May God bring each of us to that wonderful season through faith in Jesus as our one and only Savior from sin, death, and the devil. Amen.