

SERMON: 2018/10/06 (The Funeral of D'Ann Bragg Schmitt) - *Isaiah* 61:1-3; *Rev.* 21: 2-7 & *John* 11:21-27_BTR

What is this *thing* called "the Gospel?"

- that uniquely precious message of the Church of which she has been the custodian for thousands of years?

You know Saint Paul, one of the first - and most significant - theologians, used the term *sixty(!)* times in his letters.

Sixty.

He just couldn't say it enough.

He found it so *exciting(!)*:

that one word - in Greek, εὐαγγέλιον ["*Evangelion*"].

It was two ideas, really, "smushed" together into a single seemingly innocuous but actually life-changing concept:

"Good news."

Good news.

That is what we *Christians* are supposed to be all about.

And yet it is something that the family and friends of D'Ann have had very little of in recent years:

it has been *bad* news followed by even more *bad* news - a barrage of it; an inundation.

'Lord, who could stand?!' [Ps. 130:3]

And yet the dreadful shock of D'Ann's tragic, *untimely* death is - was - no surprise.

Indeed, as much as one might like to "*always* look on the bright side of life," as those British comedians of the Monty Python Flying Circus remind us, for so many - for all of us at some point, probably - "[i]f life is a piece of..." well I'll let you look up the lyrics at home: [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJUHIrRoBL8M>]:

This is our - occasionally - very sad reality.

The world that we live in.

We see it nightly on Fox or CNN.

And we're told as much in the Holy Bible.

Indeed, almost right away at the very beginning:

Don't you find it significant - *sobering* - that, in *Genesis*, having *flung* the stars into the far reaches of space, and hoisted the continents from the ocean-floor, God, we're told, "steps" back and says: 'It is good.'

Not "perfect."

Not paradise.

Good: [1:4,10,12,18,21,25, etc.].

(And there's that word again!)

But if that is where the Scriptures ended, they would be *very* short.
And you need only glance at them from afar to see that there may be more to this story.

And sure enough, there is!

For the decay and disease that emerged in His creation - in our hearts, has disfigured it - ourselves - almost beyond recognition.

And He wasn't ever going to abide this grisly, unhappy state of affairs for very long:

For 'He is love', we hear: [1 Jn. 4:8].

This was the unreserved conclusion of one - John - who came to know Him personally, in the flesh of Jesus.

He. Is. Love.

And when we love someone we don't passively watch them suffer, standing at some distance away.

We run to console them; to throw our arms around them: [see Lk. 15:20 - "The Prodigal Son."].

And if it is a child - and we all are in the eyes of the Heavenly 'Father' - we pluck them up from the ground, and remove them from the situation harming them; and this God did for us on the Cross:

He was 'lifted up' high above the hill of Calvary, [Is. 52:13 / Jn. 3:14, 8:28, 12:32 / Acts 1:9] and there made possible, by His death, a new start in a wonderful place of bodies made healthy and flawless [2 Cor. 3:18 / Phil. 3:21] - a second, eternal life in 'the new Jerusalem'. [Rev. 21:2]

And this is a gift - a *free* gift - on offer to everyone: [Rom. 5:15 / Eph. 2:8].

We need only accept it; to *embrace* it.

Does that sound too good to be true?

Certainly, spoken aloud, it *sounds* far-fetched, like wishful thinking.

But that's okay, for we need only *believe* it; to have *faith*.

And not to cling to some vague hope, but to see, clear-eyed, that we can *know* these things as The Truth, because they were declared to be such by one who has *seen* the other side, and thrown *open* the gates of the grave: *Christ*.

- who now waits, watching to see who will join his army in white, [Rev. 7:9,13] standing on the shores of a crystal sea; [Rev. 4:6] D'Ann, we trust, among them.

And boy(!) you should want to be one of their number, when those saints go marching in!

Because what comes next - that really is worth looking forward to, amen.