

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord Will Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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The Empty Seat

Introduction

It was in July-August in 1961 when coming home from vacation we went over to Grandpa and Grandma Jennings' home. I did not understand that Grandpa was dying. Going into the home, there old Grandpa sat in his chair. It was the one he sat in ever since I remember, and now he filled it, partly slumped over. With tender hands my Dad lifted him and carried him to his bed. For the first time I saw my Dad cry bitter tears as he stroked Grandpa's head. We came downstairs and his seat was empty, not just empty to be soon filled again by grandpa, for he would never sit in it again. It sat there a silent witness to the loss of a loved one due to death. An empty seat.

Last December my beloved brother in Christ ended his earthly pilgrimage and entered into the fulness of eternal life. Every Sunday morning he sat opposite me, and each Sunday he would look across, give a big smile and a wink. He was always in the same seat, second row, top right. Now he is gone and that seat will be empty. An empty seat.

Many years ago due to envy from King Saul, the life of David was in jeopardy. The hatred was intensified because David held a high position in the court and daily sat at the King's table, perhaps unaware of the full intent of King Saul's hatred and plans for killing him. However, Saul had a son called Jonathan who was a faithful friend to David. They were inseparable companions. Jonathan, knowing his father's intent to kill his dearest friend, made an agreement with David by which he would know the hatred and intent of Saul. Having discovered it was very real and knowing David would have to flee for his life, he spoke words filled with pathos. He said, "Thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty" (1 Sam. 20:18). Then there is the finality of the reality when the scripture records, "And the king sat upon his seat . . . and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty" (1 Sam. 20:25). An empty seat.

Considerations

There is coming a day when one of two things will happen. Possibly you or I will go into an empty home. The furnishings will still be there, the pictures on the wall, but there will be an emptiness, for you will look in a room or at a seat and that seat will be "An empty seat". The loved one who sat there will never sit there again, perhaps the book they were reading will be left where he or she left it, shoes never to be worn again by them are left in the closet, and the aroma of their favorite fragrance will linger on clothes, never to be worn by them again. The hardest could be the deafening silence of



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that empty seat. How they will be missed. Folks will recall them at a memorial, all sorts of foolishness will be spoken telling of how good and kind they were, they will come near when you feel the wind on your cheek, or they are “up there” at a bar having a drink or playing golf. The tragedy is, nothing could be further from the truth.

On the other hand, there may come a day when someone will know the sorrows of grief for it will be your seat that is empty! At a moment of time you will take the quickest non return trip of your existence. You will pass the portal called “Death” and enter eternity. Your ears will never hear the weeping nor your eyes see the grief entranced on the faces of loved ones. The seat at your table, the seat by the fireside will still be there, but it will be “An empty seat”. The question to be faced before that happens is, “At that moment, where will you be?” There can be no avoiding it. Each tick of the clock brings it closer, the casket for your body may already be in the funeral home or the urn for your ashes be sitting on the shelf of the undertakers. That opening portal of “death” cannot be held back. Age is irrelevant, seeming health is irrelevant, for from that moment of passing, your seat will be “An empty seat”.

Practical Questions

It is a reality that there is no coming back after death. All the prayers that can be said will be of no avail. The decision for whither one spends eternity in Heaven or Hell is made in life and that is unchangeable after death. As I consider the brother of the prodigal son, I see stark and convicting manifestations of many today.- He was an individual and that which is not said about him, shows so much of his self seeking and lack of love for the one who had gone away. Look as we want, we will never find a single iota of the sympathy of the father’s breaking heart in seeing one of his own going astray. We never read of him asking the father about him or a request to go looking for him - nothing. Does this send a quickening to our minds of those who are unsaved and gone from the sound of the gospel, or saints we have damaged, and in pious repulsive mock holy superiority live as if they never existed? Where is the love?

This man sat at a table day after day and yet seeing the empty seat, his heart was never stirred to speak to the father about him. How this is like a dart to my mind. I consider those who used to be in church fellowship but very often due to heartless leaders who valued position more than caring for the saints, see empty seats at the Lord’s Table and never speak to the Father about them. Why do we care so little, why are we so unmoved?

This individual had no pleasure in the returning of the wayward one to the father’s home, no joy in his restoration to the family, no delight in the welcoming heart of the father. How dreadfully sad! Yet how can we point a finger at him for is it possible that when we hear of someone being saved, how clinically matter of fact it can be? No doubt we are glad they are saved or restored but in the depths of heart - so what?

Time passes so very quickly. As children we gloried in how old we were, then as teenagers time meant nothing, grandparents were really old, then suddenly it was middle age followed by its soon time to retire, and now it seems like lightening the rate at which the days pass. Truly are the words:

Swiftly the moments fly
Swiftly the days go by,
Days turn to years and all too soon
Nothing is left but to die.

The question I close with is ,“Whose empty seat will come first, yours or a loved one’s?”

. . . Rowan Jennings

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