

St. James Lutheran Church
Norbert Meyer
September 18, 2010
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Readings: Romans 8:31-39,
Psalm 23
1 Corinthians 15:51-58
John 14:1-6

I first met Norbert Meyer about 20 years ago. At that time I was serving a church out in Cary, and Norbert came on board as visitation pastor at Grace Lutheran in Woodstock. Grace and St. Barnabas were in the same conference, and Norbert was a regular at the monthly conference gatherings. He was very collegial – always encouraging and supportive. Norbert always had insightful contributions to add to our discussions.

Little did I know that I would come here to serve, where Tom and Chris are faithful members – and now good friends. What a blessing when Norbert and Aurelia moved here and also became members. Tome and I can trace parallels in our lives: both our fathers served as Lutheran pastors, both sets of parents were married in 1947, both dads have been called home in these past couple weeks.

On the cover of our bulletin today is printed a passage from Romans, which was Norbert's confirmation Bible verse:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’” -Romans 1:16-17

I thought back to when Norbert was confirmed – probably around 1936. Back then the nation was still in the throes of the Great Depression. Things were even tougher then than they are now. Economic recovery was still several years away. Living by faith in those days was no small thing – it took courage and discipline.

At this time some confirmands here at St. James are in the midst of final preparations for their confirmation day later this month. They are writing essays on what it means to be a Christian – and they are also selecting their own confirmation verses. I have been meeting with these students and their parents – and I have been reminding them (as Norbert likely reminded many in his time) that confirmation is not graduation from church or the Christian faith. Confirmation is one more important milestone on the long journey of faith. I remind them that their journey is just beginning.

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Consider the many milestones on Norbert's faith journey:

- * He was baptized into the body of Christ.
- * He was confirmed in the faith.
- * He received his first communion.
- * He entered seminary to prepare for ministry.
- * He was ordained as a pastor of the church.
- * He married Aurelia, his lifelong companion.
- * He celebrated the births/baptisms/confirmations of Karen, Mimi, Tom and Michael.
- * He served five pastorates: three in Minnesota and two here in Illinois.
- * Imagine how many baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals were presided over by Norbert all those years! So many milestones/grace moments.

And now he has reached the last leg, the final milestone on his faith journey. This, too, is a grace moment. At death, God's baptismal promise is made good. Faith is transformed to sight. Norbert no longer sees as through a glass darkly – he sees his Lord face to face. He has run the race as a lamb of God's own flock, a sinner redeemed by God's grace. He lived by faith – and is saved by faith.

I suspect that over the course of his ministry, Norbert probably preached on all the scripture readings we've heard today – and probably more than once. These are powerful texts.

- * In Romans, Paul reminds us that nothing – not even death – will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
- * The 23rd Psalm assures us that God faithfully leads us where we need to go – always supporting us with goodness and mercy.
- * In 1st Corinthians 15, Paul anticipates the final victory of God: “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised – incorruptible.”
- * And Jesus reassures us, saying, “Let not your hearts be troubled – I have gone to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also.

Norbert experienced the great privilege and the great responsibility of proclaiming the good news. Now he is the beneficiary of that good news.

- * He is not separated from the love of God, but lives now eternally in God's presence.
- * He has passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and is at home in the house of the Lord.
- * His mortal flesh has put on immortality.
- * He has come to the place that Christ has prepared.

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What Norbert might say to us is something like this:

- * Continue onward together in your journey.
- * Keep living by faith.
- * Trust the Lord's goodness and mercy.
- * Follow Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life.

What we say today is:

Thank you, God, for Norbert Meyer.

Thanks for giving him to us to know and love.

Thank you for this devoted pastor, faithful husband, loving father, grandfather and friend.

And thank you for Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Savior for Norbert – and for us all.

Grant us grace to continue by faith in the way that leads to life.

Amen