

September 25, 2015
John 10:27

Funeral of Evelyn Wagner
"Love and Prayers"

To Marie, nieces, nephews, other family, friends, members of Trinity Lutheran Church. Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Love and prayers to you! That's what Evy would say to you today if she could speak. You all need love and prayers. Today is not easy, today we say good-bye to our sister and aunt, our friend, our sister in Christ. Today is filled with many emotions. We celebrate Evie's long life that God gave to her on this earth. We also grieve her death. We shed tears since she is no longer with us. We also celebrate the life that Christ has won for her and for all of us.

I am sure over the past week you all have shed many tears. Tears of sorrow and tears of laughter. I know even as I thought about and prayed about the message that I would share with you today, it brought some anxiety to my soul. I, too, am sad that when I go back to the Villa, I won't see her there anymore. If you notice in the bulletin, my sermon title printed is "My Sheep hear my voice." This is true, and we will talk about that in just a few moments, but I figured I had to change it to "Love and prayers." Today I give you my love and prayers. Prayers so that you may be strengthened in faith. Prayers that you may find hope in the midst of grief, hope in the resurrection of all flesh.

So back to my original title, "My sheep hear My Voice." Evelyn heard the voice of her good shepherd early on. She was born on August 4, 1917 to the late Fred and Mary Weiss. Soon after that on January 15, 1919, Evelyn heard the voice of her shepherd when Pastor Walter Amend at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wylie said these words, "Evelyn Rose Weiss, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." What a precious gift she received that day: the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of her sin and so much more. As she grew in years she confirmed her faith at Immanuel as she was taught the faith by Pastor Paul Burgdorf, she heard these words from Rev. 2:10 "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life." Evy received that crown last week Friday. Evelyn was active in her church from a young age, by participating in the Young People's Society.

Evelyn also loved being with her four sisters. She was the second oldest in the family and would help take care of her younger sisters. I was told that she would make lunches for her sisters when they would go out and pick the wild berries and so forth. Even from a young age you could see that Evelyn was kind hearted. She had compassion for all.

As Evelyn grew in years, she continued to hear the voice of her shepherd. She would be part of the LWML, sing in the church choir, and would teach Sunday School. Evelyn lived out her faith very well.

She also used her gifts and talents, her kindheartedness in other ways. She played guitar and entertained at house parties. She also was a homemaker. She would go in and help take care of people's homes. From what I understand, it was through this that she met a nice guy. A nice guy that she fell in love with – Harvey Wagner of Fisher.

Harvey was the love of her life. Every one know it was Harvey and Evelyn. They went everywhere together. She would even ride right next to him in the beat truck during beat harvest. They were married on January 19, 1954. They spent their career in the farming business.

Harvey and Evy were never blessed with children of their own, so they seemed to be children magnets. They would babysit everyone else's kids. Marie told me that they even watched her kids, one time for two weeks. Harvey and Evy loved kids. I even found that out when I'd go see her. She loved to see pictures of my two little girls. Sadly, I was never able to take them with me to visit Evy at the Villa, but she would send me home with a little bag of chocolate for them.

That brings to mind the fact that while she was still going to church she would bring gum for the kids in the church. Not only that, she would send gum in the cards and the letters that she wrote. The letters that would go on for pages.

Evy was a kind hearted lady. This is how she lived out her faith and showed people how much she loved them. She loved hosting family and friends, even to her final days, even in her nursing home room. Which brings up a personal story: the first time I visited Evy, knowing she was in a nursing home, I just showed up. That was the only time I just showed up in her room without first calling her. She had to know that I was coming so she could be ready for me, whether that was with a bag of candy or a cup of sparking grape juice. One time it was even one of the church cookbooks. I think the main reason was so that I didn't interrupt her Twins game.

Evy loved her Minnesota Twins, she would even coach them from the bed side.

Evy loved her family and friends. She was deeply in love with Harvey. She lived life to the fullest listening to her shepherd's voice. Yet, it wasn't without tragedy and hardships. She had her disability, but the crushing blow happened on February 2, 2003. Her beloved Harvey was called to heaven by his Lord and Savior. Even though I only knew Evy for over a year, she continued to grieve Harvey's death. She would point out their wedding picture quite frequently to me.

Over the last months, everyone could tell that Evy's health was really starting to fail. The last time I gave her communion, I even told my wife, I don't think it will be too long for Evy.

With all the love and prayers that Evy had for each of you, besides being kindhearted, the one thing we could all describe her as is faithful, faithful to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

She had her bible always next to her and read her portals of prayer every day. And when she couldn't read it herself, the visitors that came to see her read them to her. She continued to hear her shepherd's voice.

Her faith was strong, she knew where she was going. I could see that as she would confess her sins and receive absolution. I could see that as we prayed the Lord's Prayer together and Confessed the Apostles Creed. I could see that as I placed the very body and blood of her Lord Jesus Christ into her mouth. Evy was constantly hearing the voice of her shepherd. Evy knew His voice.

Last Friday, September 18, Evy heard the voice of her Good Shepherd again. Evy was called to be united with her Lord in heaven. Her soul was taken to be with Jesus, but her body lays here to rest and wait.

What happened early morning last Friday, is not natural. Death is not natural. Evy and the rest of us are not created to die. We are created to live. Death is a mere consequence of sin and it stairs at us today inside the Lord's House. Today, we heard those great words of Jesus, "I give them eternal life and they will never perish." The they are His sheep and Evy is one of those sheep. Evy was given life eternal at her baptism. Now her soul is experiencing it, but one day, she will be reunited with her body. Not her broken worn out body, but a body that is transformed, a body that is whole, a body that is perfect. Evy will live again in both body and soul. Evy's life was won for her on the cross of Jesus and at His empty tomb on that first Easter.

Dear friend and family of Evy. She was kind hearted, but more importantly than that Jesus Christ loved her so much that He gave up his life for her and then took it up again so that she can live. And he loves each and every one of you the same. It's not Evy's kindheartedness that saved her, it wasn't her compassion, it was Jesus, it was always Jesus, and she knew that. Today, she is singing praised with the whole host of heaven. Today she celebrates, but she also waits with all of us the resurrection of all flesh

Today, we laugh and cry, we mourn, but yet we remember and look forward to great and glorious reunion, with Evy and Harvey and all the saints that have gone before us. Love and prayers to you! Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.