

Psalm 119:76

**“May your unfailing love be my comfort,
according to your promise to your servant.”**

It is a sad occasion that has brought us together today. To have a dear father, husband, brother, grandfather or an acquaintance suddenly torn from us in this life is always sad. But we are Christians and should not sorrow as others who have no hope. In our affliction we will say: **“Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.” Hosea 6:1** We will say with David: **“May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.” Psalm 119:76**

Basing my discourse upon these words of Scripture let me speak to you of:

The merciful kindness of the Lord - A comfort to Christians in their afflictions

David, who wrote these words, was a pious man - we see this from the contents of the whole psalm. And yet he was in need of comfort. He had to complain about afflictions, of troubles and anguish, of sins and shortcomings, and of going astray. He remembers also that his days were numbered and that his whole life would be as a stream hurrying away. In verse 84 David says: **“How long must your servant wait?” Psalm 119:84** And when he considers that the end of his life must bring him before the

judgment seat of the holy God, he says: **"My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws."** Psalm 119:120 But in all these serious thoughts and concerns he has comfort. The merciful kindness of the Lord is his comfort. He knows of no other comfort but that the Lord is merciful, merciful even though he is a sinner. He does not find his comfort in the fact that he had refused evil deeds and intentions and no comfort would be found in good intentions. He does not find comfort in the good resolutions he had made, of which, indeed the psalm abounds. No, it is in the merciful kindness of the Lord, this was the place where comfort could be found. What is the mercy of the Lord? It is the attribute of God that he has promised that he would not give us our *"earned merits"*, but instead, for Christ's sake, he will forgive us all our sins. The mercy of God is shown in an announcement made to Moses: **"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."** Exodus 34:6 That is the grace of God which appeared in Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus to be full payment for our sins through faith in his blood. It is his righteousness that is given for the forgiveness of sins: **"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ."** Romans 10:17

This merciful kindness we believe has been the comfort of the departed. In his last days at the Lutheran Home in Mondovi he heard the call of the Lord from the attending pastor. Certainly

this call directed his thoughts to setting his house in order, knowing that he must die and not live. God has promised his merciful kindness in the Bible. All of our prayers are spoken with the confident assurance of his mercy. We know that our prayers will not be in vain - but are acceptable and heard.

We know that words from the Bible which were spoken to the deceased have the power of God to give salvation and a blessed ending to life on earth. We also know that the prayers given by concerned relatives were heard and that in this manner the deceased was guided home. Words from the Bible were spoken for that very purpose and so we say:

His trial and his griefs are past,
A blessed end is his at last.
He lives where none do morn and weep,
And calmly shall his body sleep.

So we may praise the mercy of God over him, the merciful kindness that saves sinners for Jesus' sake.



The words of our text today should also be a comfort for those of us who are still alive and remain, and above all for you, dear relatives of the deceased. I know that you find comfort in the glorious truths of the resurrection of the body to glory. But when you look at yourselves, then you may feel forsaken. Your friend, your father, your brother, is gone and the house is empty and

lonely. But do not despair. The merciful kindness of God is to be your comfort according to his Word. **“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,”** says the Lord, who has compassion on you. **Isaiah 54:10** **“But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children – with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.”** **Psalm 103:17, 18** Therefore, commit your ways unto the Lord, trust in him and he will be your guide. You will praise him who is your God.

We all need the comfort of the merciful kindness of the Lord. Here before us we see what our common lot is. It is appointed unto all people to die. Our days have a measure and our lives will come to an end. But when it comes to the question: **“How long must your servant wait?”** **Psalm 119:84** - we cannot give that answer for God alone knows. He has told us: after death there will be a judgment. All of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ for God’s eyes are flames of fire that search the hearts of his people. He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make known the counsels of hearts. Then we will have to give an account for every idle word spoken and of every evil deed. There will be no appeal from God’s verdict. The righteous will enter eternal life - but those without Christ will be condemned to eternal damnation.

Woe unto the people who must stand there in the thick clay of their wickedness and sin with no better garment than human virtue, honor, and good works.

The righteousness of any person is, at its best, but filthy rags in the sight of the holy God. **“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”** **Isaiah 64:6** Only one thing will help us and that is to wash our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. His blood cleans us from all sins. **“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”** **John 5:24**

Let us then follow his instructions while life is still before us and we can hear his Word. There is not a useless word in the Bible, for these words are both spirit and life and can save your soul.

With the Bible’s teachings we will have the comfort promised: the Comfort of God’s merciful kindness. In life and in death pray with all boldness and confidence:

Abide, Oh dearest Jesus, among us with your grace
That Satan may not harm us, nor we to sin give place.
Abide Oh faithful Savior among us with your love:
Grant steadfastness and help us to reach our home above.