

Funeral of Mrs. Geraldine Kwekel

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Bible Text: Isaiah 40:1
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Dear family, Mr. Kwekel, Gary, children, grandchildren, friends, relatives, today we have the calling to task to bring the body of a beloved wife and mother, grandmother, sister, friend, to the grave. There is sorrow but there's also reason for gratitude for what the Lord has given and we open the word of God this morning and we pray that the Lord will speak through his word to our hearts. So we want to start this funeral service with prayer.

O Lord, most merciful and gracious God, we come before thee in this morning hour. Lord, where else would we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we have nothing. Yes, we have guilt and sin and debt before thee, O Lord, we have sinned against our Creator, the mighty, the almighty eternal God, and we have turned away in rebellion and that is why death came into the world, sorrow, tears, sadness, pain, suffering. Lord, we can never never blame thee that we may see it, but O Lord, it's not only that that came into the world, also life came into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal God, the Son of God, God himself, who humbled himself and came like a servant, born as a little child in this world to be a man so that he could be the substitute for sinners, that he could take the punishment for his people for all that would believe in him, repenting and confessing their sins.

O Lord, this life on the earth, it's a time of grace, it's a time of preparation to receive grace, and for Christ's sake, because of his merits, Lord, that's what we pray for this morning in this service. Lord, thou art such a great and mighty God and we are so little. We understand so little. We do have many questions, Lord. Also when we think about the long way of suffering for Gerry Kwekel, Lord, years of losing everything, strength, communication, but still clear mind and, Lord, thou knowest all thoughts that has been in her heart. We don't know all the answers but we do hear that most impressing question of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And Lord, when we hear that question and when we know by grace the answer, it was for my sake, because of my sins so that I could be accepted by God, embraced in his eternal love. What can we say? There will be no question but submission in our hearts. We did see submission in this way of suffering, Lord. It's thy faithfulness that thou hast kept and that thou art covering all the sins that certainly were there as well. O Lord, it's such a miracle that there is forgiveness by the blood of Christ. Thou hast kept Mr. Kwekel, Gary, in this task as a husband standing next to his wife, Lord, has provided help, inclined the hearts of the children and the hearts of ladies, girls, to help. And Lord, we

pray that this voice of calling will be heard also by the grandchildren. Lord, that thou would work in all hearts. Life is so short. We are so fragile. Life is like a shadow, it's passing away, but there is eternal life as a free gift in Christ by grace. O Lord, we thank you that thou hast given a loving and God-fearing wife and mother and grandmother, great grandmother, sister, in Mr. Gerry Kwekel, Lord, and we pray, Lord, that it will be remembered, that it will be bearing fruit also in all descendants.

Lord, help us this morning in opening thy word. Grant us the Holy Spirit and that thy word will have authority, that it will overcome all natural resistance against grace, against the truth, against the judgment of the word, that we deserve thy condemnation, that we will, O Lord, admit and surrender to be saved out of our misery. And Lord, what a glory that is prepared and we have hope that this beloved wife and mother and grandmother, sister, out of this deep misery could enter that glory by grace. O Lord, that's unspeakable. We don't find words for it. We cannot comprehend it, to see thee, to see Christ like he is, to see his face, his love, his eyes, to be in the light and no darkness anymore, no tears, and glory and, God, all in all and to sing him the praise he's worthy to receive. Lord, let it be in our hearts this morning, humble us by thy word, thy Spirit, thy grace, so that we will see Christ, that he will be exalted. It's the only way and the sufficient way of salvation. Lord, we pray that all things will happen in order, providing all that we need in all the tasks. Hear us and forgive our sins. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I would like to read from the book of Isaiah 40:1-11. We open God's holy infallible word in Isaiah 40. We read verses 1 through 11. There we read as follows, Isaiah 40, starting at verse 1.

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. 3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. 6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. 9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

So far the reading of God's holy infallible word.

Dear family, it has been a long way, 62 years of marriage has the Lord given in his faithfulness as the caring hand of the Lord. Good times together and a lot of blessings. Too many, we can't even mention all of them. Then the last years were dark, isn't it? It was a deep way. I never had it such a long time praying every Sunday morning. We could visit regularly, last half-year every week, open the word, speak to her. Her mind was clear until the very end. What a blessing it was but also how hard it must have been for her. She couldn't express, communicate just a little bit, but she did receive everything. So she did receive all those times we did read the word, we did testify about Christ, witness about him. So we have, we believe that the Lord kept working in her heart although she couldn't tell what it did to her. And that's good. We give it in the hands of the Lord. When she could still speak, she did witness when we asked that she had her hope in Christ and that's the best we can have. Children, grandchildren, that cannot be taken away. Hope in Christ.

But she had the experience that she lost every strength, everything, every possibility. She was blessed with a lot of capacities and love to serve and help people and it was all taken away. How hard it was. But we do believe that the Lord has a purpose and that he makes no mistakes. Do we believe that? That's he's wise and good. He does nothing wrong. We have done wrong against God. We shouldn't certainly turn the whole thing, we shouldn't twist the whole thing, we shouldn't put God before our judgment seat, but we all have to appear before the judgment seat of God, and you'll have to answer. God is not obliged to answer us. We will have to answer, if there is not the intercession of Christ, there will be a thousand questions that we cannot answer if we don't know grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Scripture part speaking about comfort, you would take time and sit next to someone and talk to a person, just show interest, do you do it? I hope you do, you can be so busy, and you ask, "How are you doing? How is your life?" And people start to see you really listen and they trust you, and they open their heart, you will hear, "I lost my wife. Oh yeah, yeah, and I had surgery recently. You know, and I have such a deep concern about my children." It will come out. We will discover that people are looking for comfort, isn't it? Isn't that true? We all have in our hearts a need for comfort and those things I was talking about, those things are not the deepest reasons, the root of the matter why we need comfort.

We should certainly remember that, that sin is the deepest root why we do need comfort and so here in this chapter, Isaiah 40, it says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." So the Lord's commanding his servants to comfort his people. We can understand this Scripture part in three ways. We can first apply it to the people of Israel that would have to go into captivity for 70 years because of their idolatry and, you know, idolatry is spiritual adultery, being unfaithful to their God. You can also understand it about the time of the Lord Jesus Christ when he came in this world, especially when we think about verse 3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness." It reminds us about

what is fulfilled in John the Baptist, how Christ came in this world to bring comfort to those that would believe in him. And the third way to understand it is in a very personal way, that the Lord has given this word to us so that we would find comfort for our hearts, and we need it. There's a deep void inside, there is an emptiness. We all have it. It is because we have lost paradise. If you know the word "misery" in Dutch, it is a word that you can hear, you can understand it, it is saying actually out of the land. So we are out of the land where we belong, in paradise, in relation to God, in communion and fellowship with our Creator, and that is our great misery in this life, and that emptiness, that void inside, we all have it and it is causing a restlessness and we seek, we try to find it fulfilled, isn't it? You can see it everywhere in this world and you can see it, I hope you do in your own life.

So did you find it? Did you find fulfillment for your heart and for your soul? Comfort. It's such an amazing way how the Heidelberg Catechism is starting, "What is your only comfort in life and death? That I do not belong to myself anymore but to Jesus Christ who bought me with his precious blood." That's the only comfort in life and death. You have to find it. Where are you seeking your comfort? The Lord has given his word, given his servants to preach and to proclaim comfort in this world, to speak to his people that her warfare is accomplished. Warfare. Yeah, that's what we have in this life. There is a warfare of faith for God's children but isn't life a struggle for every man? You think about Job, that man has a warfare. It says there in translation an appointed time but actually it's the same word. Isn't that true, all the things that we experience and have to do in this life? So my question is: where do you find comfort? Where are you looking for comfort? God is sending his word to you here this morning. I don't know how familiar you are with it but I hope you hear it this morning. It's not an accident that you are here, it has a purpose. The Lord brought you here this morning and I don't know if you're hungry for the word but the word is coming to you.

And so what word is coming to you, children, grandchildren, family, friends, relatives? What is the word? That's the question also in this Scripture part. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?" Well, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." So we see a picture this morning. It's grass. I grew up on a farm and then you could see in the morning the grass and it was beautiful, strong, but then it would be cut off. And the sun is shining, it's dying, it withers, and there's no life anymore. It's over. And this is the illustration used here in the Bible for flesh, for human beings, for us.

So this is a message you have to receive this morning and you can see it here before your eyes, it's visible now, and you have to hear it because we don't see it by nature, and we certainly don't believe it. "I feel strong. I'm powerful. I can do a lot of things." Yeah, that's how we feel so many times. If you are healthy, especially when you are young, and it's a blessing to be young, it's a blessing to be strong, but you have to hear this word: you are like grass. It's just one moment and all that strength can be and will be taken away. "Now why do I have to hear that? I don't like to hear those words. I like to have joy. I like to feel good and these words don't make me feel good. Pastor, don't speak this way."

Oh, this is what the Lord is commanding to his servants, "Cry. What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." So you live here on earth a life that is short. It might be that you have one more day or maybe a week, maybe a month, maybe a year, it could be a decade, but it will certainly not be more than a few decades and then this life is over, this life on earth. You have to be aware of that. "Well, do you want me to be sad? Do you want me to have sorrow? Do you want me to be depressed? Do you want me to lose hope?" No, certainly not. You know, there was a pastor in the Netherlands and he was attending a certain conference and heard two people talking behind him and they said, "You see that pastor there? He is a pastor who is preaching people into the pit." And he turned around and he said, "No, that's not what I'm doing. I just tell people where they are so that they might get out. Do you understand? This preaching is necessary so that you would find hope in Christ outside of yourself."

"Cry. What shall I cry? All flesh is grass." Your life is short. You will soon have to pass away from this life and then we all have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to answer, "What did you do with your life? It was not yours, you received it from me. Your time, your health, your intellect, your money, your gifts, your capacity, it was just borrowed and the purpose was to give glory to me. Did you do that?" We don't by nature, we just put ourselves in the center. "It's all about me. I must be honored. I must have glory. I must feel good. I must have things for myself." What about the Lord? "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, that's true. I should not forget about that." That's the way we live. That is the way we are and that is guilt, that is sin before God.

"And all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." The goodness. You might feel like, "I'm pretty good. I do much better than others do. I live a decent life. You know my neighbor? He's a drunkard. And the man across the street, he's not faithful to his wife and that's not how I am. I'm so different. I go to church. I read my Bible. I do my devotions. I pray. And you know, I help people as much as possible. So what do you have to say against me?" Well, it's not about what I have to say but this word says that all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." You cannot stand before God with all those good things you do. We call them good and in a human way they are good, but they are not good in the eyes of the Lord. What do you say? Well, they are not good as long as they are not done by faith and faith is that humble submission that depending on Christ, that awareness that you in yourself are a poor sinner, that Christ is your righteousness. If that is not the inclination, the attitude of your heart, it is not good in the eyes of the Lord. God is looking into the heart, your deepest motivation, and it's not only about what you do. You might say, "Well, I gave everybody what belongs to him or her." Is that true? Did you give to God the glory that he is worthy to receive? You did not and I did not and we will never.

There's only one who did it and that is Christ, the only man who lived here on earth a perfect life like we should live, and that's why this word is saying the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever, and Christ is the Word which became flesh. In Christ God is showing his heart, opening his heart, his deep mercy and

grace prepared in his Son who sacrificed himself upon the cross. Christ lived a life that is perfect and without any sin, and we summarize it, we can do it and say he loved God above all, his whole life every moment with all his strength and emotion and mind, everything, and his neighbor like himself, and he gave himself upon the cross. You don't do it. I don't do it. There is that new beginning, that new life, there is fruit but it is worked by Christ and it is not perfect. By grace I know more what I was but, oh, I feel sad when I think that I'm not what I should be. But then I lift up my eyes and I look to Christ and I see in him a perfect substitute. So did you come to that point? Did you see you have no goodness before the Lord, no righteousness which you can stand before a holy God? You have to see that. You have to admit that. Your pride has to be broken. You have to humble before the Lord so that you look unto Christ for grace, that he becomes your hope like your wife, your mother, your grandmother did say that Christ is her hope and that will change everything. That will change your heart, your life.

"The word of our God shall stand forever." This is the message that has to be proclaimed and it's proclaimed. How many times did you hear it?

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" Behold your God. Behold Christ. You say, "Well, pastor, I don't know if I can be saved because I'm caught in sin. I'm addicted to it. You know, I can hide it. I'm sitting in church but I'm full of sin. I'm totally corrupt. I love sin. That's how my heart is." You can be saved. Christ came for sinners. I'm so glad I hear that you say this, not that I'm glad that you do those sins and that you are this way but that you admit it, that God has... I pray that God has opened your eyes that you see it in a way that you have to give up. "Have to give up? I try hard! I work!" No, that's not the way of salvation. But you have to give up like so many things your mother, grandmother, your wife, had to give up. If you come to that point in a spiritual way, you cannot do it anymore. Like Paul says, "I died. In other words, I lost hope. When I got to see myself in the light of the word and the law, I gave up. I could change a lot of things on the outside but I couldn't change my heart. I needed a Savior. It is no more me who is alive but it is Christ living in me." Oh, the day is passing away of a dear mother, grandmother, who will be blessed to see Christ for the first time or again, a sister, a relative, a friend. Here is a voice of calling. We are like grass but the word of our God shall stand forever. In other words, it is true, it is faithful in Christ is the truth, there is a way of salvation.

So I was talking to someone who thought that he couldn't be saved, isn't it? Are you? Are you sitting here? You think your sin is too much? Maybe you are just young and you're teenagers and you think, "Oh, I'm so terrible, sinful. I should change my life before it can be saved." That's a lie of the devil because Christ is the Savior. You cannot do that. "But God hates sin." Yes. So behold your God, behold Christ, and just become what you are before God, a poor sinner and lay at his feet and that you hear those words, that he is that faithful shepherd and that he is saving those that cannot save themselves, and that amazing love that he sacrificed himself for me, that love poured out in the heart, that applied to me, and that will change everything. That's the Holy Spirit working in you and

then you will hate sin, then you will look to Christ so that you will be more like Christ, not to boast in yourself, to boast in the Lord.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." That's the work of Christ. This Scripture part is about Christ. He is the Word of God and this morning it's preached to you, and here is a perfect way of salvation for those that cannot help themselves, and you cannot. Don't deceive yourself in thinking that you can make it, and don't delay by trying to improve yourself so that you might be good enough to be accepted. No, it's about grace and grace means it's undeserved. You will never be good enough. Only Christ is.

So then you say, "But pastor, it does make me feel bad." That's good because you are, but to look to Christ, that's the most sweet and good experience. Then your heart will overflow and that's the best feeling you can have, and that's good because only he is like we should be, and I find everything in him. And now I know by faith God is looking to me through his Son, and then he doesn't see sin in me but he's seeing the righteousness and the holiness of Christ, and in Christ I am his dear child and he is embracing me. We are sinners, your wife, your mother, your grandmother, she was a sinner but saved by grace and that's the only way for you.

Do you walk in that way? You have to say no. Today is the day to change. I don't know about tomorrow. There will be no better day than today. Today when you hear his voice, today don't delay. It's about eternity. It's about your soul. It's such a difference to be with God in the light, to be with Satan in the darkness. There are only two ways. It's a narrow way and a broad way. It's easy to walk in the way of sin in the world but by grace to walk in the way of the word that will last forever, and that will be an eternal comfort. In heaven there will be no tears anymore but you will see Christ who gave his blood to wash all your sin away.

Do you believe that? It's by faith. Repent and believe before it is too late. Amen.

We will sing now #228, "I love the Lord, the fount of life and grace." 228. I don't know which stanzas. 1, 2 and 3. Stanzas 1, 2 and 3.

"I love the Lord, the fount of life and grace;
He hears my voice, my cry and supplication,
Inclines his ear, gives strength and consolation;
In life, in death, my heart will seek his face.

The cords of death held me in deep despair;
The pangs of hell, like waves by tempest driven,
Rolled o'er my soul; by grief and sorrow driven,
I turned in my distress to God in prayer.

I cried, 'Deliver thou my soul, O Lord!'
Jehovah heard; I pledge him my devotion.

The Lord is just, his grace, wide as the ocean;
In boundless mercy he fulfills his word."

Let us close with prayer.

O Lord, we have no words to express the spiritual eternal things. We stammer. Those things are deep but, Lord, we hear thy word and that's proclaimed and we thank thee for thy word, such a joyful tidings that there is salvation full and free in Christ, where we have to experience that there is no strength in us, only weakness and only sin and only corruption, that Christ becomes my hope, my fountain, my salvation, my life, my way, my truth, my Lord, my Savior, my God. Behold your God. O Lord, apply it by the Holy Spirit to our hearts that conviction about sin but also about righteousness in Christ so that we will hate sin and flee to Christ and look unto him day by day, he who died but resurrected, he who ascended and is sitting at the right hand of the Father, and he who will come to judge the living and the dead. O Lord, we pray that thou would bless thy word, that we would ponder it, meditate upon it. Help us now when we have to go to the grave, O Lord. Dust to dust. Oh, that we will see that Christ has been in the grave and opened it and, Lord, that he is a living one, that we will receive comfort in him. Help Mr. Kwekel, Gary, help the children, the grandchildren, siblings, all relatives and friends, Lord, we pray that thou would make it well in every way. Also for the future. An empty place will be experienced. Lord, our eyes are unto thee. Save our souls, forgive all our unbelief, wash and cleanse us by the blood of Christ. Lord, we thank thee for thy goodness and for the many blessings that thou hast provided. Lord, hear us, forgive us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We sing now #380, "Amazing grace," and we sing all four stanzas. 380, "Amazing grace."

"Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

When we've been there 10,000 years
Bright shining as the sun,
We'll have no less days to sing God's praise

Than when we first begun."