

"Jody Blumhardt Funeral Address"

Texts: Isaiah 48:3-12

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)

Dear Fellow Christians:

Direction arrows are such little, innocuous things compared to the vital roles they often tend to play. I once missed one of those little arrows and turned south on 9th Street here in Bismarck, only to be met by a solid wall of traffic heading north, which is the only direction permitted by all those little arrows. Along the side of a highway, arrows warn us when the road is about to turn sharply left or right. They tell us how to exit a building or parking lot, how to find our gate or baggage claim in airports, which end of a box to open. I will always remember how Jody provided direction arrows whenever Paul was driving or got his story all wrong. Arrows are simple little things, often with big messages.

In fact, if we are wise, we will also be guided by the direction arrows we find in God's Word. *Especially* those that we find in God's Word. They are certainly there, and we can easily recognize them if we but take the time to look. God put them there for very specific purposes. He put them there to warn us. He put them there to direct or guide us. He put them there to truly comfort us.

The arrow that we find in God's Word on this day will do all of those things. It will, at the same time, warn, direct, and comfort us. That part of God's Word, our text, is found in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah the Prophet, the 48th Chapter, beginning with verse 3:

^{ESV}(Isaiah 48:3-12) "The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. ⁴ Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass, ⁵ I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.' ⁶ "You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known. ⁷ They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of

them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' ⁸ You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel. ⁹ "For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. ¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. ¹² "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.

This is God's Words. We entrust our very souls to this conviction – that God himself has given us these words, that they are therefore perfect and holy in every way, and that they direct our path to the heaven God would share with us through faith in his Son. With complete confidence in the power of these words to convert, preserve, strengthen and comfort each of us, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

The first arrow in our text is clearly meant to warn. The warning was first issued to the Children of Israel, but since we are told in the New Testament that what happened in the Old Testament was preserved and recorded for us today, to instruct us and to give guidance to *our* lives, it also therefore represents God's warning to each of us.

God's chosen people, the people God created through Abraham to bring our Savior into the world, those Children of Israel were in dire need of a direction change. They had turned from their God and had adopted the pagan idols created by the people in the land the one true God had given them. When that one true God showered them with blessings, the people credited their silly new idols with having done so. It's not hard to imagine how God would react to something like that. How would *you* feel if you gave someone a spectacular gift at Christmas, only to have the recipient turn and lavish their thanks and praise upon the Christmas tree under which the present sat, or some fictitious jolly red fat man? How much more then when God's people, who had been given not only land but life eternal through faith in the Promised Messiah, took God's gifts and credited their carved and molded idols. God therefore gave them unmistakable direction arrows to turn their thoughts and hearts back to him alone. That direction arrow was ingenious: God decided that he would tell his people *in advance* what he was going to do. Recognize in this the grace of God, his undeserved love for sinners. Recognizing the stubborn, ungrateful, rebellious character of his people (described in our text as having

necks of iron and foreheads of brass) he could have just cut them off. He would have been well within his rights to tell them, *“You want to credit the ridiculous images you yourselves made for the things I have given you? Then I’ll stop blessing you and we’ll see how well your idols provide for you.”*

Why didn’t he? Why did he opt instead to continue to bless them, but to tell them in advance what he was going to do? Because he’d made another promise to them – in advance. He had promised to send the Messiah from the Jewish race. In the face of ingratitude and rebellion, God kept his Promise. In the words of our text, he *“deferred his anger,”* he *“restrained”* it. With this divine arrow, which pointed back to him, the people were both directed and warned. Note those two words in our text: *“defer”* and *“restrain.”* To “defer” means to *put off* or *postpone*. To “restrain” means to *hold back*. The message to Israel was clear. If they refused to heed his call for a change in their hearts, if they did not abandon their idols and return to him, God would no longer defer or restrain his anger. That promise too God kept. The Northern Ten Tribes of Israel refused to return to him and God allowed them to be annihilated. The two Southern Tribes God sent into exile in Babylon, their destruction prevented only by God’s Promise to send the Savior through them.

Hear again God’s solemn decree in our text. See it for the direction arrow that it is and hear God’s implicit warning: ***My glory I will not give to another. Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.***

But why here and why now? Why these words, given the reason for our gathering? Because God’s direction arrow never changes. It is *always* about our God. It is *never* his will that we give his glory to another. *Never* his will that we remove him, even for a moment, from his throne as the object of our praise and worship. The reason ought to be obvious – because the glory, the praise, is his, always and only. So also on this day.

I suspect that most of you here this afternoon have attended many funerals. I also therefore suspect that you have experienced what it looks like when the arrow points to the dear departed, when God is replaced with a human being as the object of praise. It’s not a good look. Certainly not in God’s eyes. We all understand the temptation, the draw. It just *feels* right and natural to sing the praises of the one who has been taken from us, to extol the virtues of the loved one whose absence causes us such sorrow. There is certainly nothing wrong with remembering all of the good things that we respected and admired about the loved one who is no longer with us, the problem is failing to give credit where credit is due. ***“My glory,”*** says our God, ***“I will not give to another.”*** I’ve had the privilege

of knowing Jody for almost 30 years. One thing I can tell you with absolute certainty: she would have it no other way. And if you know Jody, you know that she would not be equivocal or wishy-washy in her conviction.

The Apostle Paul put it this way in one of his Letters to the Church in Corinth: ***What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?***^{ESV}(1 Corinthians 4:7) God’s own indelible direction arrow. The hymn writer put it this way:

*My guilt, O Father, Thou hast laid On Christ, Thy Son, my Savior.
Lord Jesus, Thou my debt hast paid And gained for me God’s favor.
O Holy Ghost, Thou Fount of grace, The good in me to Thee I trace;
In faith do Thou preserve me. (TLH 375 St. 5)*

Note how hymn writer rightly recognizes his place as the recipient of God’s goodness and grace, never the giver; the one who is provided for, never the providers (*The good in me to Thee I trace!*)

So it is altogether fitting and right, at times like this, that we share with each other all that we recognized and appreciated and respected about Jody, but that we do so in praise of the One who gave her those gifts, and also therefore who gave them to us through her.

There is one final function or purpose for those arrows that God provides for us in his Word. It is, in fact, the noblest function, the chief purpose: true comfort for his children.

In our text, God did not direct and warn Israel because he hated them but because of his great love for them. His desire was that they turn from their idol worship, which was the path of eternal destruction, to the path to heaven through faith in the Promised Messiah. Understand that God in his Word does, at times, warn and redirect each of *us*, but he does so because, as the Apostle Peter wrote: ***The Lord... is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.***^{NRS} 2 Peter 3:9 What an awesome truth is here revealed to us about our God. He wants each of us, sinners all, to repent, to believe in Jesus, and to thereby join him in his heaven for all eternity.

At times therefore, and to that end, God’s Word directs us to look inward, to focus on self. But this introspection, this arrow pointed inward, does not mean that God wants us to sing our own praise or laud the virtues of one who has died. It means that God wants us to look inward long enough to recognize just how sinful and unworthy

every single one of us truly is. Jody would be the first to tell you that she was not worthy of the least of God's mercies. How can that possibly result in true peace and comfort? Because it is only in recognizing our sin and our absolute helplessness to make up for or pay for that sin that we are ready to be redirected outward by that same Word of God. All are sinners, but it is only the one who despairs of self and recognizes the need for rescue, for outside help, that has any use for Jesus Christ. Jody was not comforted by her own goodness. She was comforted only by the goodness of her Savior Jesus. It was Jesus who paid also for her sins. Jesus who washed her clean. Jesus who saved her. That was her comfort. That is what gave her peace and confidence, until the very moment her Savior called her home.

How foolish then to replace God on his throne, even for a moment, with any human being. How misguided to direct our praise, even for a moment, to the one who has been rescued, rather than to the One who rescued her.

Here is where true hope, comfort, and confidence are to be found. Here is where Jody herself found it. Not in offering to her God the best that she could do, but in pointing to Jesus Christ as the One, the only One, who could and did earn forgiveness for all of her sins by offering his perfect, sinless life on Calvary's cross.

You and I must now deal with the result of the sin that we brought upon ourselves through our disobedience. We mourn our temporary loss, but not as those who have no Savior, for we are reminded that the temporary separation is just that – temporary. We certainly ought to feel no sorrow for Jody. She has been carried safely to her Savior's arms in heaven. For her, all that is bad has ended. On this we have God's sacred promise, for it is Jesus himself who assured us that ***"whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."*** Pray rather that that same Jesus will preserve you in that same Christian faith, that you also may one day join her where she has gone. Amen.

Hymn – “I Know that My Redeemer Lives”

1. I know that my Redeemer lives! What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead; he lives, my everliving head!
2. He lives triumphant from the grave; he lives eternally to save;
he lives all-glorious in the sky; he lives exalted there on high.
3. He lives to bless me with his love; he lives to plead for me above;
he lives my hungry soul to feed; he lives to help in time of need.
5. He lives to silence all my fears; he lives to wipe away my tears;
he lives to calm my troubled heart; he lives all blessings to impart.
7. He lives and grants me daily breath; he lives, and I shall conquer death;
he lives my mansion to prepare; he lives to bring me safely there.
8. He lives, all glory to his name! He lives, my Savior, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: I know that my Redeemer lives!

The Prayers and Benediction

The Closing Hymn – “Be Still My Soul”

1. Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide,
In ev-ry change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.
2. Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He hath the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.
3. Be still my soul; tho’ dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in the vale of tears;
Then shalt thou better know His love, His heart
Who comes to sooth thy sorrows and thy fears.
Be still my soul; thy Jesus can repay
From His own fullness all He takes away.
4. Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
when we shall be forever with the Lord;
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Silent Prayer

All are invited to remain in the sanctuary for a short slide presentation, and for light refreshments in the fellowship hall immediately following.

A Victory Service in Honor of Our God

In memory of Jody Blumhardt

The Order of Service

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – “Amazing Grace”

1. 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.
2. The Lord has promised good to me
His Word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come.
T’was grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.
4. When we’ve been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.

The Reading of the Obituary

The Scripture Readings:

The Epistle Lesson: ^{ESV}(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Responsive Reading of Psalm 23

Pastor: The LORD is my shepherd

Congregation: **I shall not want.**

P: He makes me to lie down in green pastures:

C: **He leads me beside the still waters.**

P: He restores my soul:

C: **He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.**

P: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

C: **I will fear no evil:**

P: For You are with me;

C: **Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.**

P: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies:

C: **You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.**

P: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

C: **And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

The Gospel Lesson: ^{ESV}(John 17:20-26) (Jesus said) "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

The Confession of Faith – (*The Apostles' Creed*)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

Born of the virgin Mary

Suffered under Pontius Pilate

Was Crucified, died, and was buried;

He descended into hell;

The third day He rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven

And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;

The holy Christian Church, the communion of saints;

The forgiveness of sins;

The resurrection of the body;

And the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn – "*Beautiful Savior*"

1. Beautiful Savior, King of creation, Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I'd love Thee, truly I'd serve thee,
Light of my soul, my Joy, my Crown.

2. Fair are the meadows, Fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flow'rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer; He makes our sorr'wing spirit sing.

3. Fair is the sunshine, Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer Than all the angels in the sky.

4. Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, Praise, adoration, Now and forevermore be Thine!

The Sermon – ^{ESV}(Isaiah 48:3-12) "The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. ⁴ Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass, ⁵ I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.' ⁶ "You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known. ⁷ They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' ⁸ You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel. ⁹ "For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. ¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. ¹² "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.

"Arrows"