

Funeral of Jeannette Ford

Saturday April 20, 2019

Mount Comfort, IN

Not Verbatim

Jeff Thayer

I feel like the time has already been special. The quietness of this multitude of people is so effectual, so respectful.

Sometimes on a special occasion like this some of our hymns can take on a special meaning. Hymns that we usually sing at Sunday morning meeting or some other meeting. Now this hymn was appealing to me... "God is Here Amongst His People". There's a verse in this hymn concerning going in the work. I remember one time, someone was leaving our staff... we were at loose ends, and this hymn came to me, "God is Here Amongst His People". I appreciate so much what all of us have meant to each other. What Jeannette has meant to us. God is still here. Still here among his people. So maybe we can sing this hymn together to start this service.

Congregation sings hymn 173, God is Here

Kevin Nailleux Prayed

Janine Spieth

We are gathered here today in memory of Jeannette... that some of us knew well and loved... we think of the family. We know how that Jeannette loved her family and spoke often of her family. My fourth year in the work was with Jeannette and she shared of her childhood. She shared of the days when the gospel came. My time with Jeannette I appreciated that she had love and compassion and care and a tender heart for the people. Her life was dedicated to this gospel story. I'm thankful for what she was to me and what she was to others. The things that she shared; I just feel that Jeannette shared the things that we can hold on to. She did not have chaff in her life because she brushed those things away and she kept the good things. The things of the spirit in her life were the things that she spoke. I appreciated that so much.

Last year and the year before last I had the privilege to be in the area where that Jeannette resided in the Kingston Care Facility in Fort Wayne. When Ruth and I began that year, two years ago, we began that year having gospel meetings in the facility in which Jeannette resided. It was a wonderful experience to see how Jeannette's life affected those people and her influence on those people. To see those that came to those gospel meetings and the part that Jeannette had in those meetings. There were times when Jeannette was very, very weak. One time when she said that she just could not have a part in the meeting because she had a very bad day and she wasn't ready to have a part in the meeting. But when we came into that meeting it was that Jeannette wants to have a part, what flowed from her...the strength and the clarity of her message. And I wondered where was that coming from? And so, it was as she shared always. So that zeal and the dedication to the gospel was her life and it remained with her to the end.

I appreciated the verse in Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". It was a privilege to see the good work that God began in her life and it was performed until her end. I remember one of her roommates and the noise that came from the other side of the room. It was so loud at times we could hardly visit. And there was another lady attending those gospel meetings and that lady loved Jeannette.

And I mentioned to Jeannette could it be that you could have a change of roommates? But Jeannette said, “oh, no, I could never do that, I could never ask, I wouldn’t ask.” And that meant so much to me to see her contentment. According to her situation she was content.

Then the last time we saw her she had lost her strength and she was in her wheelchair. Beside her was another resident. And Jeannette had her hand on the resident and her other hand reached out to the wheel of the lady beside her. And she was trying to wheel herself and she was giving her strength to wheel the other woman also. But she had no strength, but she was giving everything that she had. I am thankful for the privilege and honor to be with Jeannette.

Gerri Weiner

I appreciate all that Janine has told us. We are just here because we loved Jeannette. This is a wonderful tribute to Jeannette. To see all of you sitting here. If she was here, she would be weeping touched to see all of you here and see your love and respect. We all want to thank Gerald and Gay and Kevin and June for their faithful, loving care all these years that Jeannette needed help. Very much appreciated by all of us.

I also had my fourth year with Jeannette. It’s very interesting that we both had our fourth year with her. So, it was my first year in Indiana. The first walk we had I thought I can’t keep up with this woman. Janine and I were talking, and we were saying we were running to keep up with her because she was not wasting a moment. One more cute thing, if we did not have time for a walk that day, we were to say that today we are busier than Murray Keene. Because Murray always said that he had time for a walk.

One thing she said to me from the beginning very often is that I had the best mother in the world. I believed her. She talked a lot about Kathy and Jessie and what they meant to her and how much she loved them. She talked about her first days and we appreciate that. I have never been close to Cherry Plains, but I feel that I have almost been there, hearing so much about it.

I feel that Jeannette gave me some special gifts. Maybe the most special was her love for souls and her love for this work. I must confess that I didn’t go into this work with that feeling. But her zeal was so infectious that it began to kindle a fire within me, and I began to see what this was all about. How we heard that in giving it will bring us more joy than anything else.

Another gift was that she loved everyone, all the friends. She wasn’t partial. And we didn’t just go to places that were easier, but we went everywhere. And we tried to encourage everyone. And that is still special to me.

Another gift was her gratitude for the gospel. She was a happy person; I think we would all agree. I thought of two verses that maybe she could tell us if she were here. How to be happy and how come she was happy. One of those verses is in Isaiah 54:2. “Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left;” Then in Luke 6:38 “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” That’s the wonderful picture of Jeannette’s life and her heart. You know in the world most people think that happiness comes by getting what they want. Yet when they get more, it is never enough. We should remember that the secret of happiness in life is to give. And she gave. And she laid down her life. She poured out her life in God’s will and she knew the secret of joy. I can’t imagine the joy and peace that she experiences now. And it will only get better and greater.

So, I will also tell you about the last visit I had with her about three weeks ago. She was already confused and like we were hearing she was weak, and she could not really do anything with her hands.

But when the time came for music therapy, she had to be there because that was her job. She had to be in there. We went with her, but she couldn't really do what they were asking but she was happy. And they did this activity where the music would stop and one of them would give a compliment to another person. Most of the people would give a compliment like that is a nice color that you are wearing or that your hair looks nice. But when it came to Jeannette's turn the lady said, "I want to thank you for the life you lived before us. You are such a wonderful example of God's love. And I just want to thank you for that." It was so beautiful, but I don't think that Jeannette took it in. But we did. Such a beautiful testimony of Jeannette. She gave and gave until the end which is a not like our Savior because He is still giving. I'm just thankful for her lifelong friendship and I'm glad that she is safe at home now.

Kenion Coleman

I can say Amen to that. My thoughts went to the Romans 16 because Paul mentions some women in that chapter that labored. Phebe, Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis. The names made me think that they were very different women. Years ago, when I was in Indiana, there was Jeannette Ford, Margaret Knaggs and Loyce Hopkins and some others, and they were very different women. But this is what they had in common: they labored with their all. There was no competition. They were friends. They pulled together. Their care for the Kingdom did add a lot to the Lord's people being established and settled and at peace. Very different women. I think we could say as far as serving God you don't have to be like somebody else. You just have to be heard. The Lord will know those that are laborers, workers, saints and the Lord's people. They are all mentioned here. It seems like Phebe was entrusted with this letter to the Romans. These people that had no thought of making a name for themselves but working hard for others. We're glad for the charity, the love of God, that can be in us, to love others. But the love is, we want to be right, we want to think right, we want to do right... to be right with God. That really was my chief thought... it cannot be put into words, but what Jeannette and those others meant to individuals and to those meetings and homes.

Maybe I'll also mention those women who stood afar off when Jesus was crucified. Remember that he was teaching to take up your cross and follow me. Perhaps in a special way, anyone who would have a calling like Jeannette, knows about the cross. It's not easy for a family to understand that, even families in the fellowship. When someone goes into this work... it's being called. It means dying for them, and others see it. So, we know, for someone like Jeannette, there's a special price that we can understand a little bit. We have a hymn that says, wherever you see the ripened fields of grain, be sure some corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died. That would be part of Jeannette's life. Not just the fact that her life is finished now, but she was at peace with that. I like that verse, give a portion to seven, yea to eight... we can think of Jeannette like that, hoping for all people even among contacts and strangers... hope for people. That was the nature of her labor. We're glad the way the nature of this kingdom of heaven. We think of those who watched Jesus die, feeling so helpless... but they were very dear to the Lord. All the Lord's people are very dear to him. Both those who are homeless for the gospels sake and those who remember them, pray for them, hope for their labors, and what joy it is when they see fruit of their labors. This is the way it is in the scriptures. Servants, his people, one people, one heart, one faith, one doctrine... very sincere and hope in the labor. That's Jeannette.

Workers sang 404 – There is no gain

Jeff Thayer

I thought of a few verses too, regarding the work... hard not to think of the ministry when we think of Jeannette leaving us. She's really not been able for a number of years. But she never left our ranks. She was always interested in our work, encouraging us in our work, disciplining us about our work. I just want to read some verses to you and see if this is what Jeannette would say.

1Co 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

1Co 9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me.

1Co 9:18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

I feel like that is very much the testimony of Jeannette. It was Paul's testimony of course. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of. Jeannette never felt that she had conquered this thing of preaching, being a worker. There's so much more to being a worker than preaching.

I remember talking to her about a visit we had had in a home... a very nice visit. She said, "Oh, I wish I could inspire visits like that all the time". I said Jeannette, you inspired that one. She never felt like she got very far. But she felt like Paul... woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. Not all workers are able to continue in the work, but even those who weren't able to continue would agree with his testimony that when we were called, it wasn't a career choice, and it wasn't a choice about how to make a living, it wasn't something we volunteered for. That's what he's saying... if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward. Volunteers would think that they'd like to be a preacher and preach the gospel to people. I do this thing willingly. But the workers are not volunteers. This is a commitment. It isn't just making a living. I can honestly say that I've hardly even thought in my years of being in the work about making a living. Sometimes I think about those verses where Jesus said... take no thought for the morrow. Who can really do that? You folks have all your responsibilities, your families, your homes, providing for us. You have to take thought for the morrow. But really, I have lived like that, and Jeannette lived like that. Taking no thought for the morrow. As far as her provision and care was concerned, we have all of you to thank for that of course. God provides for that, doesn't He? She didn't volunteer, she was committed... woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.

I remember when she was diagnosed with MS. I think she was about 50 years old at the time. Barry and I were together with her and she was telling us about this diagnosis and that the doctor felt she could have about 10 more good years. Barry's reply was... well I hope somebody could guarantee me 10 more good years! But she had 20 more years in the work. Her health was good and then she wanted 50 years in the work. She kept on a little longer than she should have. I think of some of you sisters who are here, some of her last companions who helped her keep going so she could reach that goal. I think there's 10 of Jeannette's co-workers here today.

I thought of 2 of those verses that Kenion mentioned... Romans 16 about Phebe. I think of Jeannette in eternity and how much Phebe and her would have in common, if they could be together and know each other... know what they have in common, some 2000 years apart. I'll read that verse:

Rom 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

Rom 16:2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer (or helper) of many, and of myself also.

That's something that could have been written about Jeannette. We put out these workers lists that we get excited about seeing who will be with who. But that workers list basically says that... We recommend unto you... you can receive them into your homes, you can trust them with your family, with your home, with your car, you can trust them to teach what is right. I commend unto you... a wonderful

testimony of Phebe that I think we could write about Jeannette. She has been a succourer of many, and of myself also... wonderful helper.

I've known Jeannette for as long as I can remember. She was in our state shortly after I was born. She was in the field where I lived when I was just a lad. I remember one time she was going to hypnotize me. It was just one of the things she did. I woke up one morning and she said I'm going to hypnotize you too. But then she looked across at me and said, "No, I'm not going to do it". I said, "Why not". She said, "your hair is too long." I really don't think that my hair was too long. But I remember taking that very seriously and I went to my Dad and told him I need to go to a barber.

Another time I remember that Jeannette came to our house to help us hang some wallpaper. We had moved to an old farmhouse that needed a lot of work. The workers were so good to us. My folks were young. I didn't go to school that day. I didn't feel very well that day until the bus went by and then I felt better. Jeannette and I worked together scrapping wallpaper. She accused me all day long of having workeritis. Years later she came here to Indiana and she heard back from Pennsylvania that I was going into the work. She wrote me a letter and after she sealed the letter, she put a little p.s. on the back of the envelope... "p.s. we hear that w-itis is terminal. We hope so. You're doomed." She always encouraged us. She used to say to us, you know you can do things that I can't, so I have to keep you going. In the years of her sickness she knew what she couldn't do but there wasn't any doom or gloom about her, or any kind of hardness, she always tried to encourage the rest of us to do what she couldn't do.

One more verse that might be worth mentioning that could be Jeannette's testimony is in Romans 1; "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle separated unto the gospel of God." Separated unto the gospel of God. I remember a time when we were in preparations in Pennsylvania and some of us were working late into the night. Our older brother, Taylor Wood, was there and he came out. He came over to us boys and quoted this verse, "you know this thing about being separated unto the gospel of God that is what's wrong with a lot of ministries today. They are not separated to the thing because they have a lot of other agendas, personal goals, purposes in their living. He said, we need to be separated unto the gospel."

I think of Jeannette, like we have been hearing that she loved her family, she loved New York, she told us often about Cherry Plain and the mission and all that went on there. A lot that could have drawn her back there. But she was separated unto the gospel, separated. And she didn't have any other agendas. When she woke up in the morning, it wasn't about what she could do for her own personal gratification or something for her family even though she loved them. She was here and you were her concern, you were who she wanted to labor for.

Jeannette was just a wonderful example to all of us in this ministry, and I appreciate that she was always so personable with us all the time. She wanted to encourage us all in this ministry. I'm going to miss that; I'm going to miss her prayers and I'm going to miss so much that we had so much because of her that will help us in the future days. We are thankful to the God of Heaven and for work He can do in the lives of people that mean so much to us. We are here temporarily, and we live eternally. These relationships we have are costly, but they are valuable. This fellowship that we have is so valuable and we want to treat it as we should with all due respect here. Sometimes people wonder how the calling into the work would work. Like Paul, Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel. You know how things like that come clear because it is not by some apparition, we know it is not by some very miraculous happening, but it is having the fear of the Lord. It's fearing lest we disappoint God and that's is what we need to have: the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, it is the beginning of counsel, it is the beginning of direction. I don't want to disappoint God. And Jeannette lived with that fear. May that fear increase in us so that the great respect we have for God would help us that we don't disappoint Him.

Irving Ross

I am glad for what we heard about Jeannette here from her co-workers for I have a lot better chance of knowing Jeannette of her days since she went into the work. But I did have the privilege of being in gospel meetings when she first came. One of the sister workers wrote to us that there had been quite a number of years that she hadn't seen anyone profess in her and her companions' meetings. But sometime prior to when Jeannette came to meeting, the minister they knew came. The sister workers were in some other town some 60 or 70 miles west of Petersburg, Cherry Plain. This minister was kind and seemed to take a little interest in their work. They moved on after a while away not knowing where this Mr. Norton was. Though he made the contact for them. They came to know that he was in Petersburg. So, I can remember going to the gospel meetings there in the Methodist church in Petersburg about 6 miles north of the cross roads called Cherry Plain. That's when we first got to know about her family. As the gospel meetings evolved Jeannette and her mom came but because of a serious sickness, tuberculosis her dad wasn't there much. He had to be in the home almost all the time. We got to know her sister Cathy... not so much Jessie at the time, but later got to know her too and they are with us today... we think of them losing their very precious sister. Mom died a few years ago now, so little by little death takes its toll for all of us. So, we're glad God planned this to help us have a thought about what's after death... how to get ready for that appointment. That's what the gospel meant to them as they listened. We're glad for that. We're glad that our parents were diligent about getting us to gospel meetings. It encourages us today to see people putting out a real effort to get to the meetings and giving ear to the gospel.

Jeannette used to tell a story on me. I'm not sure how much color she put in it. I graduated in 1951 from high school and she graduated in 1955. So, I was 4 years older. They came to our house; grandmother cooked a meal. We had fellowship with them... this was after they professed. In her junior year she had gotten a class ring. During the meal her ring hit a glass and let out a loud ring. She claimed that when she looked up, us 3 boys there and our sister, we were all kind of stoic but she claimed I had a smile... because her brother had sworn us to secrecy saying don't attack her ring... she was very touchy about it. So, we're glad for those early days when she separated herself from her former life and the Lord waited to separate her unto the gospel.

I'll just read a couple of verses ... Paul speaking about his own experience

Php 3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Paul had achieved the righteousness of the law, prospering about his own people, having been more diligent than them, trying to apply the law to his life... the teachings of that law. Of course, they were the production of self-works. There is a righteousness that is for appearance. Jesus said of some, they appeared to men to be beautiful. They had the admiration of men. Fortunately, Paul was honest. He felt condemned by the part he wasn't able to do. Now he was thankful that he had attained the righteousness that is by faith. We can get to know the power of God in this life and surrender to his will. We can see that in Jeannette's life and her mom's life, coming to a point where we see that we've been wrong, there's a repentance, gone through that process. Also coming to the point where we believe the blood of Christ can take care of our sin and the grace of God can help you have victory over sin. So, they went through that process and I was glad to know them before I went into the work, and see that process reflect the evidence of their belief. It's the conquering by his grace that begins to imprint on us the likeness of Christ. That's how he became just like the father while he was here. And so little by little we're glad that the word of the gospel is polishing that likeness. God planned before the world began that he would conform us to the image of his son.

Maybe I'll also mention:

Php 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Php 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Php 3:21 Who shall change our vile body...

We saw Jeannette with that vile body of humiliation for a number of years, a body suffering with disease, illnesses, weakness... a broken, weak body.

Php 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Php 4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

Php 4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Php 4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow labourers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

We men in the work didn't have as much to contend with in some ways as our sisters in the work. One way was... there were groups out there that didn't think a woman had the right to preach the gospel. They used versus from 1 Corinth 14 and 1 Tim 2 that said that a woman was to keep silent... in their unregenerate mind. They didn't understand that there were prophetesses in the bible. When Paul was speaking about the gifts of the Spirit, one was the gift of prophesy, that was to speak forth the message that God has inspired to be spoken and the Spirit has quickened so that when people listen to it they don't just hear the voice of the messenger, but they hear the voice of the God who sent the messenger. When Jeannette and her mother listened and began submitting, they weren't submitting and committing to the messenger but to the one that sent the messenger with a God sent message. That's the privilege she had in the work; she would see that happen as she went in the work herself.

My second year in the work, we were having meetings, and in one meeting no outsider was there, and while I was speaking about 15 people came in from a church that was against women preachers. So, we were shifting gears in the middle of the stream to try and have a message for them rather than just a message for our friends.

Later we went to visit a man from that group, and I went with him out to see his nursery, shrubs etc. He asked some about our belief, so I told him some, and about our ministry, and I said that also women are in this ministry. I said that God had planned that there would be women that would bring the gospel to people, just as well as men. But the women would be in subjection to the men. A woman wouldn't try to take a leading part. They didn't have to be suppressed by a law to stay silent. They had it in their heart to want to be that way because God put it there with the new divine nature. I told him about a lady that had 50 years in this work, and I had 2 years. Yet in a meeting this lady wouldn't contest that she had seniority, she wouldn't think of that, she wouldn't struggle with that. She would just want it to be the way God planned it to be. There would be no struggle and no hard feelings. He said... if that is true, that is wonderful. Because their way of keeping women silent was by very strong commands.

I was thinking about Jeannette. Most would know that she was a straight shooter. A verse came to my mind today about Jeannette. 2 Corinth 1. Paul had to write some strong corrections to these people because they were missing the mark and there were problems that had to be addressed. He said he wrote that letter with many tears.

2Co 1:24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

When these people had received that first message, they must have been shell shocked. Jeannette had the capacity to shell shock. Because she was very straight with the message. But you didn't have to listen long to realize that she didn't want to have dominion over your faith. She wanted to be a helper of your joy.

In Philippians, thinking about what Paul said about giving himself in the work for these people that were hearing. Paul had an infirmity in the flesh. They had accepted it and tried to help him with it. It's quite a thing to want to take out your eye and give it to someone else. He said that if it were possible, they would have taken out their own eyes and given them to him. And now these years later he says to them:

Php 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Php 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Php 2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.

That's just a little picture to me about what we're doing. The Lord's the one who made the great sacrifice. Our sacrifice is small, comparatively, but it is our all... as it must be, and it comes from a dying life. I think of two amongst us. We go to homes, and when we leave, they thank us for coming. Thank us for help in the scriptures. And we're thanking them for what they've done for us... they provided food... everything. We live on a 2-way street. You're thankful and we're thankful. And each one feels they received more than they were able to give.

2Co 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

2Co 4:18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

It's wonderful that God could put finishing touches on Jeannette's life even in those last years when her outward man was perishing.

Jeff Thayer

For a number of years Jeannette has been requesting that we sing this hymn, May our hearts or flow with praises... at her funeral. She told some of us that if we didn't sing it, she'd come back to haunt us! It's with joy that we sing this hymn.

Congregation sang hymn 239