

God with Us

On Sunday, May 3rd, Clyde Schultz died at Valley Senior Living on Columbia. He was surrounded by his loving wife, Irma, and his son and daughter-in-law, Steve and Joan Schultz. I was blessed to be there as well, sharing this holy moment with his family. What made Clyde's death unique was that he died while we were sharing Psalm 121, Psalm 23, prayer, and the Lord's Prayer. As the words, "he will keep your life" from Psalm 121 were spoken, we could see his breath changing. As the words, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" from Psalm 23 were spoken, Clyde went home with Jesus.

I have long believed in the closeness of the Lord to his people. Not only is he close enough to us when we die to bring us to heaven, but he is also close to us in every time and place. Now I know that it's not Advent or Christmastime, but I think it is always appropriate for us to remember the Lord Jesus was born into our world as Emmanuel, which means "God with us". So, as we are going through hardships in life, as we are struggling to make sense of a world overcome by a microscopic coronavirus, as we are facing the power of even death itself, we know for certain that we are never alone.

I know for a fact Clyde understood God was with him in his life. One day not long ago, Irma called me and asked if I might visit Clyde, because he had some questions for me. This past winter, he definitely was sensing his time here in this world was nearing its end. So, like any person, he had some questions about dying, about heaven, and about salvation. We talked that day and when we were done, he smiled and said, "Well, I'm glad we got that straight!" Then, he told me in good times and hard times, through surgeries, a prosthetic leg, and a stroke, he had always believed God was with him.

Clyde was emphatic about this. I believe him because I believe the very same thing. The Lord is our Emmanuel. He is our "God with us". So, whatever we go through in life, even during these days of the coronavirus, we are never truly alone. The Lord Jesus, God's beloved Son, is sheltering in place within our very hearts. It is just as he said in the Gospel of Matthew, 28:20, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Indeed, the Lord is with us through this entire scary and strange time, and he will help us, lead us, heal us, and of course, save us in every possible way.

This is how the Lord was with Clyde as well. As he faced the scary and strange moment of death, he was not alone. As he walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he was hand in hand with the Lord Jesus Christ, his Emmanuel, his "God with us". This Jesus was with him through his whole life, his birth and baptism, confirmation and graduation, military service and lifelong work, marriage to Irma and birth of his children, time with grandchildren and fishing at the lake, as well as his lifelong struggles and finally his death, when the Lord Jesus took him home to live in heaven.

This is how I pray you will face your life today, in this time of the coronavirus, tomorrow, and for the rest of earthly days, knowing that you are hand in hand with Lord Jesus Christ, your Emmanuel, your "God with us". He will be with you every day, loving you all along the way, helping you in every way you need him, healing you from all things that harm you, and giving you peace amidst everything that is troubling. Then, at the end of your time in this world, he will be there for you once again, as he was for Clyde, "to keep your life", so you too, "will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."