**Faith and Loss**

**December 30, 2022 Martha Rodman**

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Psalm 116:15 ESV*

My friend passed into the arms of Jesus this week. We had a wonderful conversation a few weeks ago...she wanted me to reserve a copy of my book for her. We talked about Jesus, as usual. She loved him in a very quiet, but fierce, way. I am happy for her. She is no longer in pain and dealing with the health struggles of older age. I don't know if she really understood how much value she added to those around her.

Losing a friend, family member, or spouse leaves a hole. It just does. I think that is a testimony of loving and caring for someone. It is God's way of reminding us to love those who are present in our lives. I listened to someone explain why Jewish people put stones on the headstones of their loved ones instead of flowers. They said it is to remind them they are eternal beings. There is permanence about them and rocks symbolize that. Flowers fade too quickly for them. There is joy knowing that Anne is with the Lord, rejoicing in His love, and she understands all that we don't.

The word translated "precious" means of high worth, value, or cost. In the Hebrew, the word translated "saints" means those who are the faithful followers of the Lord. God cares about how and when His people pass from death unto life. The New Living Translation declares that the Lord cares deeply when his loved ones die. He who watches over us, watches over that transition as well. We are precious to him in life. It is only understandable that we would be precious to him in death. Unfortunately, sometimes we don't really comprehend how precious people are in our lives until after they are gone. After we have lost the ability to interact and learn from them. Then it is too late. I know we hear this a lot—but we often need reminding, love while you can. When it is over, it is over.

Sometimes the way people die is confusing to our perspective. Anne fell, hit her head and a few days later passed. She, as far as I understand, never regained consciousness. For her family and friends, our last conversation would be the last time we heard her voice. I am grateful that my last conversation with her was positive and uplifting. We had made plans to connect—I guess that will have to wait.

I can't get away from the word "precious.” God knows how costly it is for our loss as well. As we walk through this loss, he knows how to comfort us and care for us. He knows how to teach us through it. He knows how to use it for our good, if we let Him. This week as I read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah I noticed there were several lists given of individuals. Scripture memorialized them forever. They listed some because they married foreigners (negative), others because they helped with rebuilding the temple and the wall (positive). While we, who are alive, have choices to make concerning our contribution to God's Kingdom. Will we choose to add value to it, or choose our own ways? I know Anne had some regrets about her life. We talked about them. The good news is she was working on changing and correcting them, and trusting Jesus with those things she couldn't change. I regret not taking the time to be with her more.

My friends, any loss is painful. Let us learn from it. Let us love stronger and longer. Let us forgive quickly and encourage those around us to do the same. In Revelation 18, we find a phrase repeated twice: in a single moment (vs 17, 19). It is true about opportunities; they come and go in a single moment. Let's make use of them, ok?

Father, I am so grateful you see us as precious, both in life and in death. I ask that you help us honor and respect those around us as precious as well. Please comfort Anne's family and all who have lost loved ones this past year. Grief continues long after the memorial service is over, so we ask that you teach us how to comfort with words and actions. Once again, we ask you to help us number our days. In Jesus' Name, amen.