

Birch Memorial – May 4th, 2024
OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP

Prayer

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our rock, and our redeemer.

AMEN

Gracious

I had only known Heidi for about nine months before she died, but even in that short of time, it was evident to me that she was very gracious and hospitable. We always had coffee and cookies when I came over to visit her. And, from what I've learned, she opened up her house over and over again to visitors from Germany, to her weekly German classes, and many others, be they friends, family, or maybe just acquaintances.

Earthly Home

If you've been in her home, you know that Heidi loved art, music, and literature, with some of her favorites being Mozart, Beethoven, and Van Gogh (please excuse my American pronunciation).

But neither she nor her home was perfect. Because we live in a fallen and corrupt world, **Sin**, **Death**, and the **Devil** were there as well. Now

Birch Memorial – May 4th, 2024
OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP

while I don't know Chris and Steve all that well, if they were anything like my three boys, there were fights and disagreements, things said or done that should not have been – **sins** of commission, as well as things not said or not done that should have been – **sins** of omission. Too soon, **Death** was also a part of the home, as her beloved husband Ernest died in 1989, just shy of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. They had met at Heidi's family's restaurant in the mid 60's while he was stationed in Germany. He captured her heart and brought her with him to California. His work allowed her to travel back and forth to Germany often, with her last trip being just last November for a large family gathering. She received her diagnosis of cancer soon after she returned from that trip. Disease and decay are an ever-present reminder that death is the temporal consequence of sin. As for the **Devil**, I don't know about Heidi, but I know that for me, he sometime lies whispers into my ear, such as "do you really believe that your sins are forgiven?" or "what you've done is unforgivable!"

Enough of the bad news – let's turn our focus to the Good News of God's promises.

Birch Memorial – May 4th, 2024
OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP
Dual Citizenship

Did you know that Heidi had dual citizenship? No, I'm not talking about German and American. She never gave up her German passport, which she had because of where she was born and who her parents were. However, as was read in earlier (Phil 3:20):

*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior,
the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Soon after she was born, she gained her true citizenship when she was reborn through water and the word – baptized – at St. Wigbert Church in Grossbrenbach. God adopted her as his daughter, forgave all her sins (no matter at what point in her life they were committed), and marked her as His own.

As a citizen of heaven living here on earth, Heidi was an ambassador, as noted by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 5:20):

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his
appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be
reconciled to God.*

Birch Memorial – May 4th, 2024
OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP

Maybe not in words, but in the many acts of hospitality over the years, enabled and gifted by the indwelling Holy Spirit, Heidi did indeed make such appeals to those around her. These fruits of faith served to validate her relationship with God. They also provided evidence of the faith and hope that she had in the promise of forgiveness of sins and eternal life that God had given her at her Baptism.

Heavenly Home

But Heidi can no longer act as host, Christ has come for her and has taken her to the Father's house, to the place prepared for her, as we heard in the reading from John's Gospel. We can only see through a mirror dimly what heaven will be like but rest assured that it will be better than we can even imagine.

For those of us who are left, it is indeed a time to mourn – to grieve, cry, and be sorrowful, not for Heidi, who is enjoying her eternal reward, but for those of us who are left who will indeed miss the joy that Heidi brought to our lives.

Birch Memorial – May 4th, 2024
OUR TRUE CITIZENSHIP

But we should also rejoice – the pain, suffering, and anticipation of death that Heidi experienced the past several months is no longer. She is free, with an incorruptible and glorified body.

It's my prayer for all of us that can hear my words that we would know Christ in this life as she did, so that we can look forward to a blessed reunion with her in heaven in the life to come. AMEN