

Interment – Mary Rossiter

Opening Words: Russ

One of the very first pastoral memories I have of Park Road Baptist Church, is walking in, an anxious butterfly or two flitting in my stomach, entering the side door of the chapel building, past a line of hungry Wednesday nighters, and walking into the old Lydia/Fidelis Classroom on the very first Wednesday night of our career here, and finding some of Park Road's saints waiting on the call for dinner. Mary and John Rossiter's faces were two of the first I remember seeing, two of the first names I remember committing to memory. And they were there every single Wednesday night. They sat with Bill and Billie Earthman and John and Doris Moore, Al and Ilene and Pat and Betty, some of our most faithful, most supportive souls.

They will go down as a kind of pantheon in my memory... the first elderly class we came to know – and our first beloved supporters. Mary never left that list. Beloved. Faithful. Supporter. We've been through several financial secretaries since Mary left, and within the first month of breaking each one of them in, I'd have a note from that office... we received a gift from a "Mary Rossiter... must be a visitor... you might want to contact them..." No, I'd have to reply. Mary is one of our most faithful church members... she just can't commute from Atlanta! I know she would have if she could have.

She has always been dear to me, and I will always have a soft spot in my heart for her memory – her kind smile, her warm words, her gracious heart. We gather this day to celebrate those gifts to this world, and the God who bestowed her with such a spirit.

For Mary Rossiter... thanks be to God.

*****Scripture: Amy**

Prayer: Amy

When Peace like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul

It is well (it is well) | With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

BENEDICTION: Russ

Now, Mary, May the Lord Bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forever. Amen.

Graveside Reading of Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

For my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

For... the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith...

The one who is righteous will live by faith.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

For thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

For I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Psalm 23 is from the KJV; all other scriptures (Philippians 4.19, John 14.27, Romans 1.17 and 8.38, John 10.10, 2 Timothy 4.7-8) are NRSV.

RUSS'S CALL TO WORSHIP...

Even after memories fade, there is a feeling... a certain emotional mist that surrounds an event, a time, a person... People who lived through the Great Depression and that War to End All Wars, may have forgotten, graciously, gratefully forgotten, many of the details... but a particular visceral aura still comes to them at the mention of those difficult days. By contrast, specific moments of births and weddings and the celebrations of accomplishments fade over time, but a light cloud of excitement of enthusiasm remains for a lifetime.

When I hear the name Mary Rossiter... a feeling of warmth and gratitude comes to me. I've lost many specific memories – even though it wasn't all that long ago – but when I think of Mary, a smile always comes to my face, the experience of knowing her and being influenced by her gentle spirit will stay in my heart, if the details are lost in a jungle of memories that the years tumble together indiscernibly in my mind.

She has become part of that Great Cloud of Witnesses of which the scripture speaks, and that glow of her life will continue to impact those of us who knew her well beyond the details of our days and years together. Even as she has gone before us, wrapped forever in the heart of God, we gather in the radiance of a life that will live as long as we can call her name, remember her smile, pass on the touch of her care in our own fingers. We gather today to celebrate the life of God's beloved and ours, Mary Rossiter. Thanks be to God.

Let us worship together by singing one of Mary's favorite hymns, How Great Though Art...