

"Safely Home At Last"

Funeral Talk for Fawn Terri Hazen May 24, 2002

Some time ago a famous newspaper journalist explained how he went about arranging for a meaningful conversation with some person whom he wished to interview. He would ask a question similar to this: "Would you mind telling me the inscription you would have written on your tombstone?" He reported that many would give answers like "have fun", or, "gone to another meeting", and so on. Then the journalist was asked what he himself would have written on his tombstone. He replied very quietly and sincerely, "Safely home, at last."

What comfort those four simple words are, what a feeling of peace they bring when we who are left behind are so painfully aware that Fawn's spirit has left both its physical tabernacle, and consequently the earthly homes she has occupied.

"Dearest Fawn," wrote our mother in one of her birthday cards,

"You may think that we don't remember,
Now that we've reached our age of September,
That we went for a walk in the summer evening rain,
And that is when we chose your name.

And you've lived up to that name by far,
Such a sweet and gentle person you are,
The Lord has blessed us beyond our due,
Especially dear, when He gave us you."

For her first 18 years she made her home with her parents and 7 other siblings she has always remained loyal and loving to.

For the past 32 years Fawn's affections were centered in the home where she and Ron were parents to 5 lovely children. This is where she meant whenever she said she wanted to go home, including the last week at the hospital.

If we take any comfort in the thought that Fawn has gone on to yet another home, how much greater is the peace in knowing that it is not an unfamiliar place to her.

William Wordsworth helps us understand this truth in these beautiful words he penned

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

(William Wordsworth, "Ode On Intimations of Immortality.")

I had the opportunity to work with over 90 children in Church for two years and had the responsibility each of those years to help them in preparing for an annual Children's Sacrament Presentation. Each year the presentation included about 10 songs. While I loved many of the songs and the tunes are still familiar to me, I have always clearly remembered the words to one of them. When the children and I learned this song, the truthfulness of the teachings in it pierced my soul and I think this is what Wordsworth meant in the line "Not in entire forgetfulness". The song is "I Lived In Heaven" - and these are the words -

I lived in Heaven a long time ago it is true
Lived there and loved there with people I know. So did you.
Then Heavenly Father presented a beautiful plan,
All about earth and eternal salvation for man.

Father said he needed someone who had enough love
To give his life so we all could return there above.
There was another who sought for the honor divine.
Jesus said, "Father send me, and the glory be thine."

Jesus was chosen and as the Messiah he came,
Conquering evil and death through his glorious name,
Giving us hope of a wonderful life yet to be
Home in that heaven where Father is waiting for me.

The first verse simply teaches we lived in Heaven, or the preexistence, prior to this earth life. As the Apostle Paul taught to the people of Athens on Mars' Hill, in Acts chapter 17, we are the offspring of God. The beautiful plan our Father presented to us was the opportunity to come to this earth, to gain a body of flesh and bone, and have the agency to make our own decisions. Job recorded that upon hearing this plan in the Council in Heaven, we literally "shouted for joy". This plan had inherent risks. Along with the opportunity to make righteous choices, to gain knowledge, keep the commandments and do the things that would make us more like our Heavenly Father, there would be opposition, pain and suffering, evil influences and choices that could bring sorrow and unhappiness. This is why our Heavenly Father included in the plan that an atonement be made on our behalf, that a sinless and perfect soul, the Savior, would suffer for our sins and shortcomings. If we would do our very best, and sincerely repent when we made mistakes, a way was provided to make up for our inadequacies.

Not everyone was happy with this plan, however. John records in Revelation 12:7 - 9 about the war in heaven, describing how Michael and his angels fought against Satan. It was Lucifer's plan that we would come to earth without our agency. We would not have opposition in anything, and we would automatically return to Heaven upon death. Sometimes this plan might seem a bit appealing, but when we really reflect upon the choices we make every day of our lives and the learning and growth that comes from those decisions, how stagnant a plan Lucifer's really was. It must have been appealing to many, though, as 1/3rd of Heavenly Father's children followed him, were cast to earth, where the battle still continues.

Years ago a little girl in the Hawaiian Islands had taken her friend home to play. The elderly grandmother in the home spent much of her time while they were there reading the Bible. Every time this little girl came, the grandmother was reading the Bible, and she said finally, to the little granddaughter, "Why does your grandma spend so much time reading the Bible?" And the little granddaughter replied, "Oh, Grandma's cramming for the final examination."

A few weeks ago I told my sister Jodi I was praying for Fawn that the Lord would take her home. Jodi shared with me something that made me stop praying for this. She said we do not know what is in a person's thoughts and that each day Fawn had on earth was one more day to prepare to meet the Lord. While I was looking at the here and now, the suffering and pain, Jodi was looking at the eternal perspective.

Harold B. Lee stated: "Here and now in mortality, each one of us is having the opportunity of choosing the kind of laws we elect to obey...The place we shall occupy in the eternal worlds will be determined by the obedience we yield to the laws of these various kingdoms during the time we have here in mortality upon the earth." (Conference Report, April 1947 pg. 6.)

I know from many, many talks with Fawn that she believed fervently in a life after this one. The Apostle Paul said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What a marvelous home she must be returning to, for I know that she loved Him dearly.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Ronni Bates
Fawn's Sister
