

Julius Ewald Karl: The End of his Life Journey

And a Defining Moment for me

By his wife of 31 years, Yvonne

On 5 April 2006 there happened a moment in my life that greatly impacted my future. God and a new friend were there to comfort me through it. I don't expect others to comprehend the magnitude of this event because it was just for me. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to share it.

For the most part, I have been an independent gal from birth – one of the characteristics my husband said attracted him to me. Although I was 10 years younger than he, we married, melded, and worked tirelessly and harmoniously in marriage and ministry giving no thought to age difference. In 1985 at the age of 54 (when our children were 7 and 12), he refused to give in to the diagnosis given him of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and continually declared the scriptures over himself and believed he would receive complete healing. Finally after 13 years of persevering through numerous monthly doses of chemo and radiation, he was pronounced cancer-free. We rejoiced. His energy was renewed—mentally, spiritually and physically. God had answered our prayer. We had a wonderful summer.

In September 1998, he began having pains in his legs then in his back. Simple tests showed nothing. However, in early December, the neurologist ordered a biopsy of his spine. Thus it was on 14 December 1998, the oncologist delivered the shocking news that cancer had now invaded his major organs. Furthermore, chemo treatments would neither cure nor lengthen his life and likely would make his remaining days more difficult. Julius turned down treatments – having already placed his life in God's hands. He came home from the doctor and called our daughter and his sisters and told them, "My Father is calling me home." He seemed convinced, but I still believed he would overcome this diagnosis as he had so many times before.

Immediately he took charge of end-of-life issues. He planned his funeral—which he chose to have in the funeral home chapel—and directed that a celebration feast be held at the church. He

called a good friend since seminary days to come to do his service. He picked out his casket and his cemetery plot. He apologized for not having any life insurance and prayed God would take care of me. He told me to take care of business as quickly as possible and move on with my life ... specifically to “take a trip.” He knew I loved to travel; he didn’t. He made it clear he only wanted immediate family with him when he died. He had fully embraced an imminent move to his heavenly home.

He was able to be up and dressed until about four days before his death. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, his sister came from Canada and mine from WV to see him unaware it would be his last day of communication. They said their good-byes knowing they wouldn’t again see him alive and returned to their homes with a snowstorm in the forecast.

Six weeks had passed since the final prognosis. Our children, now 25 and 20, kept vigil with me over the next hours. We played all 24 audiocassette tapes of one of his favorite singers, David Ingles, took turns reading scripture to him, and played the entire score of Handel’s Messiah. At 7:20am after a peaceful night, his pulse stopped. It was 25 January 1999. When we looked outside, a beautiful, deep snow had fallen leaving everything glistening white.

I had fasted and prayed over those nearly 14 years (minus the summer of 1998) for his healing, for us to grow old and share life together serving our Lord. I was disappointed, but accepted that cancer had taken his life and God whom He loved so dearly had welcomed him home. For years he had often said: “When I die, I’ll just move to my Father’s house!” He told me if he went first, he would be waiting for me. He repeated these things just days before he died.

Having grieved many times when it seemed like he might be at the end of his life, I was emotionally and spiritually strong when he died. Oh I missed him, and I cried ... yes, I wept off and on for some time –usually in private. But God kept me strong. My joy was full even though a part was missing. As the years passed, I was content with memories, the love of my children, my extended family, and a multitude of friends ... and most of all because I knew how much God loved me and

would always be my rock and my fortress against sadness and discouragement. My life was truly hidden in Him.

Seven years passed. My brother-in-law invited me to go to Israel with the team from his church. My sister would also be going, and my niece said she would be my roommate. Prior to this, I had no leading or inclination to go to Israel. My husband, having been born in Germany during Hitler's reign, had no desire to go and in retrospect was likely a bit fearful to be in the land of the Jews. But this was different!

Traveling around the land where Jesus had lived brought alive so many bible passages. My heart was thrilled and my mind kept rehearsing the stories. I could feel the oneness of spirit among my fellow travelers. We prayed; we laughed; we cried; we praised our Lord.

Then it was time to visit one of the places speculated to be the tomb of Christ's burial. It didn't matter whether that piece of information was validated or not, it was the idea of viewing the inside of an empty tomb and knowing it mattered not whether from there or from another tomb, Jesus Christ indeed rose from the dead, walked around town, and was seen by hundreds of people before He ascended to His Father.

Here, I pick up with the story I wrote earlier:

My Experience at the Tomb, 05 April 2006

Jerusalem, Wednesday, 5 April 2006.

After walking through the empty tomb at Calvary, we followed the path up to the park benches and sat down with others to discuss what we had seen and await the communion service we would soon experience together

Throughout my time in Israel, I had been thinking how wonderful it would have been if my late husband could have shared this experience of traveling through the Holy Land—walking through the land where Jesus walked two thousand years ago.

Then my ears perked up. Could it be? Yes; there was a group of people assembled by the open tomb singing "Fairest Lord Jesus"—in German! It was the first German I had heard in Israel, and this happened to be one of my husband's favorite hymns. I sang along on the first verse, but by the time they began the second verse the reality of the words and the incident began to well up within the depths of my soul. This group sang all five verses in German—my husband's native tongue.

It had been a while since my tears came gushing with this magnitude. You see, my husband is buried in the Resurrection section of the cemetery in our hometown of Livonia, Michigan. Right beside his grave is a replica of

the tomb with the stone rolled away and a sign reading: “He is not here; He is risen!” The German group was singing beside the open tomb—under the exact same sign. No one else in our tour group indicated they knew German. In fact, most of them were oblivious to the singing. A few people later told me they thought the melody sounded familiar but couldn’t place it. Why? It was just for ME! That’s how much my Lord loves me!

After returning home, I shared this story with my children. My daughter asked, “Mom, what day did this happen?” I thought back and realized it was Wednesday. You guessed it—April 5—my husband’s birthday! But he, too, has risen and is very much alive with his Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Oh how HE loves me.... and you!



Any grief that remained in me was released that day at the tomb in Jerusalem. I will always be thankful for my new friend and sister in Christ, Hyacinth Rose, who held me while I released it all—having no idea what was happening in me but praying all the while and knowing God was at work. I shall forever feel bonded to her in love.

Since that time, I have noticed a new spring in my step, a new freedom that’s difficult to express. Grief is gone—even that which I did not know still remained. Now when I think of my late husband, it is with joy that he is in the presence of His heavenly Father whom he dearly loved, free from pain and worldly conflict and confusion, forever basking in the sunlight of God’s glory—Jesus Christ!

All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All glory, majesty, power, and authority are his before all time, and
in the present, and beyond all time! Amen. – Jude 25