

A TRIBUTE TO DEL DELKER

Sermon preached at Loma Linda University Church 3-24-18 By E. Lonnie Melashenko
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“AT EVENTIDE IT SHALL BE LIGHT” (Zechariah 14:7)

Through music, memories, videos and the spoken Word this is a celebration of life! We fumble to find appropriate words for one who meant so much to so many. Del Delker’s life touched everyone here today, plus millions worldwide. We were all overwhelmed by this “giant” who dwelt among us. Distinguished. Eloquent. World ambassador for Jesus Christ. Del came into our lives, left *footprints on our hearts* and we are never, ever the same. Wherever she passed she left the fragrance of heaven. We miss her – already!

Said the poet Longfellow in “A Rainy Day”

*Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.*

But then I’m glad for these lines from an Adventist poet:

*And when the tasks of life are done,
Like weary child at set of sun,
I’ll lay me down in sweet repose,
Nor tremble though the tempest blows.
I’ll hide me from earth’s rude alarms,
Safe in the Everlasting Arms.”¹*

Said the prophet in Zechariah 14:7, “**At eventide it shall be light.**” There is always light, always joy, always life in the dwelling of God’s saints. No matter how black or stormy the night, it’s always light for the Christian. That’s why this service is a celebration. The angels are in this very room, *reflecting in our faces* the glory from above that indwelt our friend Del Delker. The greatest words in all of literature are found in Deut. 33:27: “*Underneath are the Everlasting Arms.*”

¹ “*From Strength to Strength,*” by Mrs. L.D. Avery Stuttle (“Review and Herald,” 11-20-1884)

H.M.S. Richards used to say at funerals which I attended, “Oh! It’s a wonderful thing to be a Christian! Because Jesus changed everything. At death we don’t cease to exist. Paul says clearly in Colossians 3:3 *Your life is HID with Christ in God.*” Death is not a period, but a comma.

I took notes at Richards’ funerals. Elder Richards described how before Jesus came, life was a dark and lonely vale. With Jesus, in the night of death, hope sees a star. There was no hope before Jesus. Go to the catacombs; thousands of miles beneath Rome with ten thousands of tombs. Read it on the epitaphs. Those B.C. (Before Christ) are without hope: “Good-bye friend, **forever**.” “So long, *eternally*.” But A.D. (after Christ came) the epitaphs completely changed! “Until morning.” “Thank God, I’ll see you again.” Jesus changed everything! Death now is just a little nap. A rest from the Kindergarten of this life until Resurrection to the University of the Hereafter.

Jesus changed every funeral into rejoicing.² Because He is Lord over death. And everyone who believes in Him will be raised up at the last day. “*Changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump.*” No more pain. No weak hearts. No more blind eyes. No more loss of limbs. Eternal youth!

To every Christian, Richards declared, we can cling to Colossians 3:3: “*But YOUR life is hid with Christ in God...and when He shall appear then shall we also appear with Him in glory.*”

Listen! This means when we die as Christians we do NOT cease to exist. Our life is “*hid with Christ in God!*” Yes, that’s a mystery. But Ellen G. White adds even more. She says “Our personality is perfectly preserved.”

Del has fallen asleep. She is one of the casualties in this great battle. But her life “*is now hid with Christ in God.*”

The bigger question today is this: Is YOUR life hid with Christ in God? If not, it can be! Today. Give your self completely to Him. It isn’t feeling. It isn’t emotions. It is what’s written in God’s Book! Richards would say, “It’s like what’s written in a checkbook. You take it to the bank. It doesn’t matter if you have a cold or how badly you

² Del had a terrific sense of humor. Everyone loved her for it. Her favorite humor card was “Maxine.” Let me share one that she wrote to me. Del publicly reminded audiences that most people don’t know how to spell her name. They think it is Del Decker. Nevertheless, she personally answered thousands of letters addressed to her at broadcast headquarters for nearly 59 years. But the very funniest and memorable envelope came addressed to “Belle Belcher.” I have some Maxine cards from Del signed, “Del Delker.” (And beneath it she writes, “Alias, Belle Belcher.”)

feel that day. The check is what counts. It is what Jesus says!" It's what's written in the Book.

It is a wonderful thing to be a Christian. Every one ought to renew his/her faith right now! Repeat after me John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Del hasn't perished. She's asleep. Safe in the hands of Christ. She belongs to Him. We can still sin and lose out. Not Del.

There is one less soldier in the battle now. Oh, "*It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live.*" (Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 466) Each of us needs to ask God this afternoon, "God, please use ME now!" And if we, too are faithful, someday we'll fully know and understand and say, "God knew the best!" "***At eventide it shall be light.***"

Occasionally in the dark history of our world, there comes a light to us. Brilliant. Beautiful. Far beyond the "evening star" and Venus. Like Haley's Comet. A light brighter than the stars of the first magnitude. Shining more than all others exuding a majesty and beauty that makes people feel good just to be near them! These bright stars are not always with us. But we love it when they are. Del Delker was such a light. A "star." One who glowed with rare beauty so radiant even worldly associates took notice.³ But when many of these stars out there in space are examined more closely we discover that all that light shining isn't really their own light. It is *reflected light!* It is borrowed from another source – the sun!

Del reflected light that glowed from Jesus Christ. For the "Son of Righteousness" had taken up residence in her life. And that light forever shone with radiant beauty that lit up the darkness of the world around her – wherever she went.

Most assuredly Jesus said, "*He who believes in Me HAS eternal life.*" In the Greek that's the present tense. Not "might have," or "someday will have." No. Present tense: "HAS eternal life." *Fait accompli*. It is done. No false hope. Not idle words. But words based on the Solid Rock.

³ Wherever Del traveled around the world for the Voice of Prophecy, thousands crowded stadiums to hear her sing in their language. She sang impeccably in 15 different languages. In 1993 Brazil celebrated their 50th Anniversary of Au Voz de Profecia in Portuguese. Harold Richards took the retired "King's Heralds" (Jerry Dill, Wayne Hooper, John Thurber and Bob Edwards) to the northern jungles of the Amazon; Jeannie and I took Del Delker with Arautos Do Rei (The Portuguese King's Heralds) into the southern cities of Brazil. On a number of occasions our two teams met in giant stadiums seating 40-60,000 people. Presidents of the country would arrive in the stadium driving their motorcades into the soccer field; they'd climb out of their limousines to greet Del Delker. No. They didn't come to hear me or Harold Richards. No, they had grown up since childhood listening to Del Delker on the radio singing in Portuguese and now they wanted to meet her in person and have her sign autographs on old long-play record album covers!

So an evening star came to this dark world and pushed back the darkness with heavenly light and joy and radiance. With dramatic eloquence and beauty. Evening stars are not always with us. But we love it when they are. For now, this evening star has set. But soon in the order of things to “rise again.” This time with the Bright and Morning Star – never to fade. Never to set again. This time to shine for eternity.

H.M.S. Richards always closed his broadcasts with his inimitable ongoing poem, “Have Faith in God.” He would write of Del,

*Have faith in God; Christ weeps with us today.
Have faith in God; All tears He'll wipe away.
Have faith in God; Del's King – He's on His way!
Have faith, dear friend, in God.*

Patriarchs and Prophets p. 481 puts it this way:

“As the glow of the descending sun lights up the mountain peaks long after the sun itself has sunk behind the hills, so the works of the pure, the holy, and the good shed light upon the world long after the actors themselves have passed away. Their works, their words, their example, will forever live. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.’ (PS 112:6)”

Let me close with H.M.S. Richards’ poem: “It’s Always Morning.”

*“When it is night, with shadows deep and still,
And all the cloudy flags of day are furled,
However dark the hour, remember, friend,
It’s always morning somewhere in the world.*

*In the soul’s night, when every star is gone,
And love’s bright chalice into fragments hurled,
Ah heart, know this: The sun will rise again;
It’s morning always somewhere in the world.*

*Long, long ago within a garden close,
A stone was moved before the dawn had pearled,
And One arose, victorious over night,
So now it’s always morning in the world.*