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Trinity Episcopal Church

Lamentations 3: 22 – 26, 31 – 33

Psalm 130

1 John 3: 1 – 2

Luke 12: 22 – 34

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**“It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord,”** writes the prophet Jeremiah in the Book of Lamentations, somewhat stoically.

**“Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplications,”** writes the Psalmist, passionately, and perhaps more realistically.

Olive Hughes Schilling was somewhere in between Jeremiah and the Psalmist, but probably closer to the realism of the latter. Olive never wanted to be here without the love of her life, Jack Schilling, and it was almost more than she could bear. No matter what her death certificate says, I have to think that she died of a broken heart. In her last few years after Jack died, she often wondered aloud – and I have to think just as much silently to God – why she was still here. But here she was, and we’re the better for it. And today, we celebrate her life and her faith, and the joy, love and laughter that she brought to her far-flung family and friends.

Olive was quite a character. She was filled with a wonderful, very dry and witty sense of humor, but she also did not suffer fools lightly. One of my favorite stories that she would tell was from her days in the British Army during WWII. She was a clerk and spent her days typing away. One day, one of the male officers was annoying her immensely. She could not express her feelings verbally, but she did take it out on the typewriter. For those of you who remember typewriters, it was back when the typist would have to manually return the carriage from the end of the line back to the beginning of the next. Olive was so mad at this man that, with great gusto, she threw the carriage back. Only she did it so hard, that she sent it out the open window next to her desk. She was somewhat mortified having to retrieve it, but, well, not completely.

Olive never lost her British accent or her fond memories of growing up in England. Her teapot collection and her love of flower gardens, were part of what defined her. Olive also read voraciously. She enjoyed knitting and was part of Trinity’s Loving Hands needlework ministry. She kept a funny picture of herself on her refrigerator. It was at Loving Hands, when she was trying on a very large knitted hat that someone had made and which swallowed her head completely.

“Consider the lilies, how they grow,” Jesus says in Luke’s Gospel. “They neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” The one place, perhaps more than anywhere else, where Olive found God was in Creation, and especially in fresh flowers. She would recall how her father would bring home fresh flowers for her mother each Friday when she was growing up. And well after when her mother thought they were past their peak, Olive would hang on to the drying up bits and enjoy them. She loved the flowers that were brought from the church periodically. She loved the rose bushes that Jack planted, just for her, outside their bedroom window. She loved her gardens filled with bright, cheery flowers. And Olive loved sitting out back, watching the breezes riffle through the trees, and the birds and squirrels dashing about here and there. When she and Jack lived in Mississippi, she loved being out on the water, fishing with him and tending their crab traps. Olive loved Creation and being in it, and this was her way of worshipping God and giving thanks for all the blessings of her life.

After Jack died, Olive found that being in church made her too sad and lonely. But that didn't mean that she stopped thinking about God and praying. Olive had a long history of praying. Sandy found a prayer in Olive's Bible on which Olive had written a note. It was a prayer that, at least as long as her mother was alive, the two of them each prayed daily as a way of being close, despite their geographical separation. That prayer, and another of Olive's favorites, are reprinted in the bulletin.

Always self-deprecating, Olive wasn't very sure that she would pass muster for heaven when she died. She would have been the first to tell you just how far from perfect she saw herself. But Olive needn't have worried. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom," Jesus reassures his disciples – and us. Olive is now there, in God's Kingdom, in the greater and more glorious presence of God, knowing it more fully than we can possibly imagine. And it is there – it is here - waiting for each of us. That is our sure and certain hope in Jesus Christ.

At 95, soon to be 96, Olive enjoyed a long and wonderful life. But she also lived through a lot: WWII and the bombing raids on London; the loss of her parents and sister; moving across the Atlantic; a divorce; breast cancer; Hurricane Katrina and the damage to their home in Pass Christian; another move here; and then the loss of her beloved Jack.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," Jesus tells us. Olive's treasure was not in things – perhaps she discovered that early on during the war when so much was lost. Olive's treasure was in her faith in God and in her relationships with people. She appreciated the many things that people did for her, especially as she got older and less physically capable, though she may not always have articulated it. She appreciated Sandy's loving care, patience and time; she appreciated phone calls, pictures and visits with her grandchildren; she appreciated the housekeeping and the meals and going for a spin in a shiny little red convertible. Most of all, she just appreciated the visits. Olive's treasure was in her heart and in her love which she gave to so many of us.

St. Augustine said that our hearts are restless until they rest in God, and they will not truly rest until we rest in our eternal home. Perhaps that's why Olive was so restless here these last few years. This fragile earth, our island home, is just for now as we walk through it for however long, walking by faith, and not by sight. Olive has ended that walk, but she walked it well.

Today, we celebrate Olive's life and faith as we have known it, but even more importantly, we celebrate her new, risen life with God, which we, too, shall one day know. So much of Scripture holds out the "Yes, but not quite yet" aspect of eternal life. It reassures us that God is not done yet; we are still a work in progress in this world, but that all things shall, one day, be redeemed and revealed in their fullness, which is – in a mysterious way of which we only get glimpses - already breaking in all around us. After all, we are an Easter people. Easter Sunday always follows Good Friday.

In the meantime, we mourn the loss of Olive from our lives. God touched all of us somehow through her, or we wouldn't be here. But in the heart of that mourning, we come to rejoice, to give thanks for all that she has been in and amongst us, and for all that she is now, in the nearer presence of God. For the life and wonder who was Olive Hughes Schilling, thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!