

Chapter 7
Matthew 24:31-46

My sister Esther and her husband Howard were living examples of these scriptures. For many years they were foster parents in Powell River BC. Many hurting children experienced love in their home. They have both now graduated to heaven.

I had the privilege of speaking at both of their celebrations of life. They were indeed celebrations of lives which had been lived for others. I pray that they will be an inspiration to you.

Prayer for Howard Lowe

I thank you Lord Jesus for Howard's life and all the lives he influenced, His family, including many foster children, his students, his friends and colleagues. .

I thank you more for loving Howard and all humanity so much that you were willing to die for all of us and for rising again, so Howard and all who believe in you can also rise again.

Thank you Lord that Howard's almost 89 years on this planet are barely a spec of time compared to the eternity he has living with you, in his resurrected body. Thank you for taking the sting of death away..

Thank you for the fact we are not saying goodbye to Howard forever and that we can all spend eternity in a place where there is no pain nor sorrow,

Howard is now free of his earthly body and now treads the streets of gold.

Please comfort Esther and the family through this time of separation and leave them with memories of a life well lived.

Thank you for the wonderful visit I had with Howard two months ago. This visit assured me that we will meet again.

So long for now my friend, I will see you soon.

God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son so that all who believed in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. Howard was a true believer.

Amen

Esther

Esther has always been Joyce's and my big sister. When I think of her I always remember her gentleness and love for all young things. She always looked after the

kittens, pups, piglets, calves and chicks. It seemed every year there was one runt chick and Esther always made sure it got its share of food.

This trait lasted all her life. Her and Howard's unstinting care for children in need earned many awards. These included:

Life Membership BC Federation of Foster Parents
125 year Confederation Medal
Appreciation Awards for Fostering from Powell River Local, Regional, and National, as well as the First Nations.
Lieutenant Governor's Foster Family Award
Heart of Gold Award (1 of 15 in BC) for volunteering
A remarkable legacy which has touched many many lives. Well done good and faithful servant.

As kids we played many games and Esther and Uncle Bob were always bigger, stronger and faster than Joyce and I. Whether it was kick the can, hide and seek or aunty, aunty I over, one of them always won. Grandpa Tilford was brought up Methodist which always seemed to be a religion devoted to boring Sundays. He generally went to church both Sunday morning and evening. The moment he left we would convert the yard to a ball diamond. When we heard that little red truck coming back it was amazing how fast the bases disappeared and we stuck our faces into books.

Aunt Josie taught Esther spool knitting, weaving and knitting and she in turn taught Joyce and I. We spent many hours doing all three and just enjoying being together. I wonder if any of our creations still exist? Esther's love for knitting lasted a lifetime. Bob Lee mentioned the cable sweater she knit for him while he was courting Joyce. She gave it to him on the hottest day of the year and he was so pleased with it he wore it all afternoon, in spite of the sweat.

I feel we had our childhood in a great season in Canada. We were far from being rich but living on a farm food was always plentiful. Our extended family provided us with aunts and uncles who dished out love and when needed discipline. Life was good!

Times have changed. Just try to imagine this happening today, I think Esther and Joyce were only 9 and 10 when they went to Saskatoon by themselves, to represent the school, at a Junior Red Cross function. They took the train both ways with no supervision. When their train arrived in Saskatoon they checked themselves into a hotel. Then they took a streetcar to the Greenwood family, who had moved to Saskatoon from Birch Hills. They had lunch there, then the Greenwood's teenage daughter, Josie, who had baby sat them in Birch Hills, took them back to the hotel. They heard her tell someone on the phone she couldn't come over as she had to look after some little kids. When they got to the hotel she explored it with them. To that time they had only seen the desk and their room. They spent the night by themselves. They attended the meeting, checked out and caught the train home, all by themselves. The next day they made a shared presentation to the school.

Also from a young age they went Church camp while I went to scout camps. We also spent some great times and Grandma and Grandpa Spani's in Watrous. One highlight was when Grandpa Spani took us out for a ride on a railway steam engine. He was a foreman at the CP roundhouse in Watrous and had just repaired it. We shoveled coal and got to blow the whistle at intersections. What a feeling of power!

Grampa Spani was a great gardener. Esther's birthday on August 10th was at the peak of gladiola season and he would send Esther a wonderful box of glads. They became her favorite flower and it is great to see a lovely bouquet of red glads at her celebration of life.

Another summer excursion was to Bob and Elsie's at Paddockwood. They always had a great garden and both Esther and Joyce learned good cooking skills while there. I think it was the first year we went that Bob was breaking land with a horse drawn plow. I would walk behind and pick up the buffalo skulls the plow turned up. By the time we finished there was a skull on the top of every fence post. When I think back I realize it must not have been too many years since the last buffalo inhabited the area as many of the horns were still on the skulls.

There was one special day on the farm in Birch for some reason or other I think of often. It was a gorgeous summer day and Esther, Uncle Bob, Joyce and I were all lying on the lawn and looking at the fluffy white clouds as they continually changed shapes. We all saw shapes of animals in them. I have no idea why this particular day was so special to me but it comes to mind more than any other memory, It was magical. This is something I still do today.

Esther was a good gardener but where she really shone was berry picking. I never figured what her secret was. I would try my darndest to keep up, but no way. She always got more than either Joyce or I. I remember particularly one time when we were staying with the Pardoes in PA. Esther, Joyce, Geoff and I all went to the Little Red River to pick Saskatoons and it was bumper crop. We each had two double paper shopping bags. After Esther filled both of her bags she topped up ours and then finally separated her two of her bags so she had three. We got a bus to go back to Pardoe's but, as we were getting on, one of Esther's single bags split and thirty pounds of Saskatoons spilt all over the bus floor. The bus driver stopped and made us pick all of them up before he would go on.

We all loved suntans and by fall we were dark brown. As a teen Esther would put ES on her back with tape so that it stayed white. It would be almost spring before the rest bleached to the point we couldn't see her initials.

Except when the Aiches came through, with their toboggan, we walked to school in the winter and biked in the summer. The rule was if the temperature was under -50f, or if it was under -25 and blowing so hard we couldn't see across the creamery quarter we could stay home. I remember the three of us standing at the second gate and arguing whether or not we could see across. Joyce said she could see across but Esther and I were sure we couldn't.

Esther was always able to take charge and accomplish things far beyond her age. When she was in high school the elementary school principal, Stan Fowler's wife became terminally ill. Esther moved in with them and completely took over, housekeeping, cooking, nursing, child care, everything. If I remember right it was for at least six months,

After finishing school she worked at the residential school in Princes Albert, I think for two years. Her love for the First Nations people stayed with her all her life. It bothers me that we hear almost nothing of the hundreds of dedicated people, like Esther, who gave their all for First Nations children.

Esther and Howard raised their own three kids plus four more long term and many dozens short and medium term foster children. Every time Esther had a baby we answered by having one a year later. But when they cheated and brought in foster kids we quit trying to keep up.

I miss you big sis. However it is comforting to know you are back with Howard and are breathing and running free. I won't be too long behind and will challenge you a good game of kick the can. God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son so that all who believed in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Esther and Howard certainly believed that and brought joy to many,

So long Esther I will see you soon.