
Yet Being Unperfect

**A homily by the Rev. Canon George Maxwell
for the burial of Lucy Lee Baker**

Pattie has given us a picture of her mother that I suspect none of us will forget. Lucy Baker with a power saw. Lucy Baker on a ladder with a roll of wallpaper. Lucy Baker hanging drapes she designed herself, cornices and all, in every house the family ever lived in.

"The original Fixer Upper," Patricia called her.

I want to stay with that picture for a few minutes, because I think it tells us something about God.

Consider what it takes to be a fixer-upper. Most people walk into an old house and see what is wrong with it. The stain on the ceiling. The sag in the floor. The wallpaper curling at the seams.

A fixer-upper sees all of that too. She has to; she is the one who will tear it out.

But in the same moment she sees something else. She sees the room the house could become. She sees the light that will pour through that window once the heavy curtains come down. She holds the ruin and the promise in a single look. And then she picks up a tool.

That is a particular kind of eye, and Lucy had it. She had it in Georgetown, in a shop full of antiques other people had given up on. She had it on Saint Martin, where she turned a house into a guesthouse and filled it with her own paintings. She even learned to lay brick and mix mortar. When a storm tore into that island home, she climbed up and repaired it herself, in her words, "with tools strapped to my waist."

She had it for a canvas, for a bolt of fabric, for a blank page.

At ninety-two, Lucy wrote a small book about her life. She called it Testimony. I want to let her speak a few times this morning, because she says some things better than I can.

First, listen again to the psalm we prayed together a few minutes ago. Psalm 139, in the old words of Miles Coverdale: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect."

Yet being unperfect.

The psalmist is telling us that God looks at us the way Lucy looked at a house. God sees us truly, all of it, the stain and the crack in the plaster. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me."

And in the very same look, God sees what we were made to be. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The ruin and the promise, held in a single gaze.

And then God picks up the tools. That is the good news this morning. Every long life has rooms that were never finished.

Lucy lived nearly ninety-eight years, and she lived them at full speed. A life that large leaves some rooms half done. Walls that went up a little crooked. Doors that stuck. Some of those rooms were finished late, at a bedside, by people brave enough to do the work.

That is holy work.

It is resurrection work.

And what remains, God finishes.

Lucy knew this.

"Jesus Christ saved me time and time again," she wrote, "only to restore me."

Restore.

That is a fixer-upper's word, and it was hers.

Jesus says as much in the Gospel we just heard. "In my Father's house are many dwelling places. I go to prepare a place for you."

Jesus is speaking Lucy's language.

He is talking about a house, about a room made ready. And the One who prepares the room also prepares the guest.

The work God began in Lucy on the second of October, 1928, carries on past the twenty-fifth of September, 2026.

The fixer-upper has been handed over to a better one.

Lucy prayed Psalm 130, which Douglas read for us: "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?"

Which of us could?

"For there is mercy with thee. With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

Plenteous.

Enough for every room in the house. Enough for Lucy, and enough for every one of us who loved her, because every one of us is a house under renovation too.

One more thing about fixer-uppers. The best restorations keep the character of the old house; they recover what was there all along and make it whole.

So when we say we believe in the resurrection of the body, we are saying that the Lucy we will one day meet again will be Lucy. The painter's eye. The dancer's grace. The nerve to try anything once.

Lucy, finished.

John saw it in his vision: a great multitude, robed in white, and "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Every tear. The tears of this week, and the older ones too.

In a few minutes we will come to this table. Here the preparing is already done. Christ is the host, and every one of us comes as a guest, Lucy's family and friends together, with our unfinished rooms.

Lucy began her book with a question: "Who other than God is always on our side?"

In another of her books, she answered it. As a little girl, she wrote, she discovered Jesus in the Catholic cathedral in Germany. "Jesus followed me home," she wrote, "and never let me go."

A child who met Christ in one cathedral is commended to him today from another.

And she left us a word for this morning:

"Dying is going home. Do not be afraid."

Lucy is home.

And the psalm says it for her, and for us: "When I awake, I am still with thee."

Amen.

© *The Cathedral of St. Philip*. All rights reserved.