

The Funeral Service

Scriptures: Luke 24:13-35; John 14:1-3; Romans 8:38-39.

Life is like a journey. We travel through each day of life, hoping, planning, looking forward to what lies ahead. We enjoy the present and remember good times of the past. But no matter how carefully we plan, no matter what our hopes and dreams for the future might be, as we travel the road of life we're going to get caught by surprise along the way. We will find unexpected hardships, delays and problems.

One of those unexpected hardships is the death of loved ones. No matter how much we prepare and think about death, when it comes we're never really ready. No matter how much or how little advanced warning we have, the death of a loved one always catches us off guard and stops us in our tracks. Because when someone close to us dies, we come face to face with our own mortality, with the fact that sooner or later each of us will die. In times like these, we have to look into our faith and seek the deeper meaning of hope in our lives.

Today we have to pause for a moment and catch our breath because death has caught us by surprise again. We pause for a moment in the journey of life to celebrate, remember, and mourn the passing of _____. _____ was different things to different people as others gathered here, a new friend in Christ.

Whatever the nature of our relationship with _____, we pause today to give thanks to God for having been able to walk the road of life with _____, for having the privilege of knowing him and sharing life with him. Today we come together with our different memories of that life. We come to share those memories and experiences. We come to remember that each of those memories and experiences was a gift from God, given as a blessing as we have walked along our journey of life.

We gather today, not to find answers to all those questions we will never understand, especially where death is concerned, but to worship God, to hear a message of good news, a message of hope and promise in the face of death.

To find that hope and blessed assurance, we turn to the Word of God, to those passages in the Bible, which are the witness of people of faith who lived long ago. These are the faith statements of people who have walked the road of life before us, facing the same trials and disappointments we face in our lives today, people who had to pause from time to time to renew their faith and regain their trust in

God. We hear the words of people who suffered distress, discouragement, pain and alienation. They were seeking hope in the middle of what looked like hopeless situations. They wanted peace in their times of distress.

Certainly _____ faced many trials in their life.

Like many folks, _____ struggled to find love in a world where love is often an elusive thing. He succeeded in finding that love with _____. He tried in his own way to show his love for those who were nearest and dearest to him. And like all of us, sometimes he succeeded and sometimes he failed.

The witness of Scripture is that's what we can expect in this life B successes and failures, sometimes more of one than the other. But the promise of Scripture is that through it all, in the thrill of victory as well as the agony of defeat, we are never alone, that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God. _____ faithfulness in attending this church he had adopted as his own was testimony that he believed that promise.

The writer of the Gospel of Luke tells us something about his faith as he shares the story of two men walking along the road to Emmaus. These two disciples were desperate, disillusioned, and discouraged. Jesus had died and his body was nowhere to be found. So they were running away from the pain they felt at his death.

But as they walked along the road, the Risen Lord came and walked with them. They talked with Jesus, and as he asked them a few innocent questions, they were allowed to share their hurt and pain, their confusion and distress. In the process of their sharing, these disciples recognized the Risen Christ and they found new hope, new meaning, new direction for their lives in his victory over death.

Life as we know it here in this world has ended for _____. But you and I have a ways to go yet. Our shared journey of life and faith goes on. Like the first disciples of Christ, we walk together, sharing our moments of doubt and our moments of faith. We walk as the wondering, hurting, confused, discouraged, and yet somehow hopeful followers of the Son of God.

But like the disciples on the Emmaus road, we do not walk alone. Yes, we have one another to cling to, and I encourage _____ family and friends to draw even closer together during this difficult time, to lean on one another for strength and support. But more importantly, lean on Jesus. Remember that our Lord is present with us, sharing our journey, bringing us new hope and faith, renewing us with his promises of forgiveness, love, and eternal life.

_____ has passed from this life through the gate of Death to his eternal home. And I pray that he has found the peace that so often eluded him here. We, _____ family and friends, continue our journey, walking by faith with the Risen Christ, in whom we have the hope and the promise that all who believe in him, even though they die, yet shall have new life, abundant life, eternal life. This is the faith we share. This is the hope that sustains us even in the face of death. And nothing can take that away from us. Thanks be to God for this hope.

And thanks be to God for His love and mercy as we continue along the journey of our life, trusting in the sure and certain hope of that day, someday, when we shall inherit the promise of resurrection life.

Let us pray: