

Some Words at the Graveside

I have no need to eulogize my father. Everyone here knows a little bit about him, and I know that you all remember him as a gentle man, a faithful man, a patient man. A man who loved, who held to a standard of truth, but without being haughty or arrogant.

I do, though, want to talk a little about what I learned from him in the last days of his life. I want to mark his life, and his passing, before we rush on in our frantic schedules.

Death, among other things, reminds us that we are not permanent.

We want to hold on to things. We want to hold on to our youth, to memories of our childhood, to our illusions about ourselves, about the world around us.

We wanted to hold on to Dad: we didn't want him to go. Now, it's really my turn to hold the baton out to my kids: there's no one else to do it!

But he needed to move on. His physical condition was deteriorating, we would say that his mental state was deteriorating. But his spiritual state was excellent, and even in his last days, the obvious love that he and mom shared warmed everyone who saw it. He inspired his children and grandchildren to follow in his footsteps, even when those footsteps faltered. Isn't that what we would like to say of our lives?

I'd like to share just a few verses from the Bible. This first verse is after Christ's resurrection.

John 20:17

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.' "

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not saying dad was Jesus, and this is a very deep verse, but I'm applying it to our situation: dad had somewhere to go, and it was important, and it wasn't fair for us to keep him from it.

Earlier Jesus had said:

John 14:1-3

1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

We all know dad was a builder, a remodeler... Since Christ hasn't come back yet, I'm assuming that dad has found a room or two to spackle, just to help out.

There are two last verses I'd like to look at, and I think they give us a glimpse of two sides of what dad is now.

I John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

1 Corinthians 13:12

12 For now we see in a mirror, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I also am known.

The first is what we will be in that future state. Our best ideas can never approach the future reality. But this verse says that dad will be able to see Him as He is-in all His glory- enabled by the heavenly change that dad has undergone.

The other half is what we shall know. We try to imagine heaven, but it is distorted by our earthly limitations and lack of proper measuring sticks. Paul promises us that this limitation, and even the ravages of age and dementia will be wiped away. God knows us thoroughly: we will be able to know Him thoroughly as well.