

Dad's Funeral message - Nathaniel Fisher 30 January 2024.

Thanks

Thanks to everyone attending today, from his friends at the TTC, Düsseldorf churches together, here at St John and St Stephens and friends from near and far, new and old. We remember dad and the family as well as the two compassion children Rosenie from Haiti and Jorge from El Salvador whom he and mum supported, I also pass on my apologies from my wife Hosanna who is unable to join us today as our daughter has a virus and had to stay in Glasgow until she gets better.

Introduction

When I think of my father I have many wonderful memories.

At the very centre of who dad was, is the fact that he believed in Jesus Christ as his Lord and saviour and that is why we are here at St John and St Stephens today. His faith is the reason I am standing here today.

So while we may be sad at dad's passing we can be happy that he is with his father in heaven, or as I call it happy sad. We can be encouraged by the words in Psalms 34:18

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."
Psalms 34:18 NIV

So I would like to look at some of Dad's outstanding qualities and the faith that inspired them today.

1. Dad's life just like his faith were significant

I'm going to begin with a reading from Ecclesiastes:

"I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and

female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 2:3-11 NIV

When I often read this I got depressed, I mean listen to the words and it appears pretty bad, but then while dad was in the hospice I was encouraged to read this again and the Holy Spirit taught me what King Solomon was truly saying.

You may have heard of King Solomon before, he was considered the wisest man in the Bible with the great wealth in history, imagine if you will, Bill Gates, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos and you're getting close.

Some scholars believe Solomon went through a period where he left God then as he drew close to his last days he gathered his scribes to pass on his last piece of wisdom before departing this earth. What Solomon was really saying is a life without God is meaningless.

I was inspired by Dad's faith, to always turning up to church and every Sunday and not just sitting at the back but eager to sit at the front, to get as close to the word of God as possible, we would often be the last to leave church but it wasn't out of religious obligation it was because dad had a genuine faith and wanted to help as many people as possible. Often I would call dad up on the phone and he would be fixing the church floor or up on the church roof or singing an extra bar of each verse of a hymn because the words were not meaningless and nor was his faith.

2. Dad had a childlike faith

Secondly dad had a childlike faith

Jesus said in Matthew 18:13

”And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:3 NIV

I love puns, and telling jokes, I get that from my dad, he found wisdom and humour and value in words and often he could be seen in a Sunday, or at Greenbelt festival serving in the children’s ministry, some of my earliest memories from summer holidays were serving at Christian youth camps. After dad’s passing Steve Lewis sent through so many messages I lost count, of the volunteers at Greenbelt who were impacted by dad serving with them and the childlike faith he shared.

3. Dad had a passion that no man could stop

It says in Colossians 3:23-24

”Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Colossians 3:23-24 NIV

If dad set his heart on something he was going for it and no one could stop it. I remember at our rehearsal dinner in California dad stood up in front of my American in laws and the bemused wait staff to sing the Peruvian blessing, all the while Hosanna and I tried to shrink under the table. Dad loved trains and buses, in fact only after we returned from our honeymoon was I told the story of how dad was so longing for a Mexican train or bus ticket that he made the short journey to the Mexican border, crossed over into one of the last dangerous parts of Mexico, got his ticket and somehow made it bad across the border an hour before it was due to close, there was no stopping dad when he got an idea in his mind, but it wasn’t just tickets or trains.

I am standing here even though Dad didn't always understand me in my pursuit of God's plan for my life but he never failed to back me, helping me get to Australia to study at college where I would meet mum future wife and where I would discover God's call on my life and I would too discover a life without God is meaningless.

Dad always supported Mum, Andrew and I and then Hosanna and Hope.

So how can we be encouraged by Dad's life? I think he would want you to know today, that a life without God is meaningless and to try and find your happiness in alcohol, or your work or by raising a family as noble as some of those might be is meaningless compared to living a life with God at the centre.

Dad would want you to know that to live a life of faith and meaning is understanding that God is love and no matter where you are today there is a God in heaven who loves you so much and just like dad he wants you to know the love of God.

As we just heard in Romans when you have Christ at the centre of your life there is no fear, so to finish off I would like to read the closing passage of CS Lewis Chronicles Narnia book which was one of dad's and then my favourite books, the last Battle, after which I would invite us to have a minute of silence so we can consider what dad's life meant and how he impacted our lives and the hope we can have because of dad.

And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.