

# Leading Funerals

***Funerals are a set of customs associated with people who have recently died, in which their memories are honored, their communities share sorrow with their families, and their bodies are released to the ground or to ashes.***

***A Christian funeral is an expression of faith, affirming the resurrection of Christ and the coming, future resurrection of his people.***

***The exact customs vary, but these are the purposes they serve.***

## ***First Thessalonians 4:13-18***

First Thessalonians 4:13-18 represents Paul's words of comfort and reassurance to a grieving congregation. What he does in this passage is a lot like what a pastor does in leading a funeral service.

He gives them information, that they might not be uninformed concerning those who have passed away.

He helps them in sorrowing, but not in grieving like those without the Christian hope.

He affirms the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He tells them what the Lord said about this — "We say this to you by a word from the Lord"

He speaks of the personal return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, our being

reunited with the believers who have gone before — whom He will bring with him and we will meet in the air. And most significantly, he affirms that we will always be with the Lord.

He concludes: "Therefore encourage one another with these words."

- ◇ A funeral helps a family to take their sorrow to the Lord.
- ◇ A funeral is an opportunity to weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15)
- ◇ A funeral is an opportunity to highlight our hope.
- ◇ A funeral is a reminder that life is short and death is coming (Ecclesiastes 7:2).
- ◇ A funeral service is a pivot to the promises.

Hear It Explained: [smalltownbaptist.net/audio/funerals/funerals.mp3](http://smalltownbaptist.net/audio/funerals/funerals.mp3)



## ***Off-Site Links***

*The Purpose of Funerals by Tony Cooke*

[https://tonycooke.org/funeral-resources/purpose\\_funerals](https://tonycooke.org/funeral-resources/purpose_funerals)

*3 Elements in Every Funeral Sermon by Brian Croft*

<https://equip.sbts.edu/article/3-elements-need-every-funeral-sermon>

*How to Write a Funeral Sermon by Mark Ward*

<https://www.logos.com/grow/write-funeral-sermon>

*How to Write a Funeral: Step by Step by Simon Roger*

<https://justdisciple.com/funeral-sermon>

Book: *Ministering to the Mourning: A Practical Guide for Pastors, Church Leaders, and Other Caregivers*, by David Wiersbe & Warren Wiersbe

[Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com) [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) [For Logos Bible Software](https://www.logos.com)

***The purpose of a eulogy is to honor the memory of the deceased and to express thankfulness to God for that person. It affirms their contributions to our lives.***

### ***Statement of Purpose: Beginning the Service***

This is the memorial service for \_\_\_\_\_

We are here to honor his memory and to reflect on the blessing he has been to us and the lessons we have learned from his example.

We are also here to reaffirm the promises of God concerning eternity and the life to come...

To worship, and in focusing on the Lord, find the comfort and strength that we need for this day, and the days to come.

This is the memorial service for \_\_\_\_\_

We are gathered here to honor his memory

We are here to share sorrow in his loss

We are gathered to show love to his family

We are assembled to draw comfort from God's Word

And from his promises concerning the age to come.

### ***Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. -- Psalms 116:15 (KJV)***

In spite of the fact that \_\_\_\_\_ put up such a great fight for his life—and we take pride in him for that.

In spite of the fact that his life is one we deeply want to honor.

In spite of the fact that he died so well...

Death is so feared by us – and it is so hurtful to us – how then can a death be precious to God?

Because death is the time of... Realization

In eternity past, God set His love on those who would be His.

Before He created the world, He made a plan for them and for their redemption.

In the fullness of time, He took on humanity and came as a sacrifice for our sins.

At salvation, He came to indwell us through

His Spirit.

Through the Bible He gave us precious promises for life and godliness.

In death, all that God has planned, sacrificed, and provided will be completely realized by His child.

Death is a time of... Reward

Jesus said, "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with Me."

Just as a parent rejoices over a child's graduation or receiving an honor, the heavenly Father rejoices to reward us.

Death is precious because it is a time when God's people are... Reunited

The Bible promises that "We shall be caught up together *with them*."

***A funeral message opens God's Word to the hearts of the bereaved and helps them think about their loss from a biblical perspective... and reminds them of our heavenly hope.***

*Put another way, the purpose of a funeral message is to communicate biblical truths relevant to the loss of the deceased person in order to help your hearers draw near to God, and to begin to answer the question, what now?*

## **1 John 3:1-3 , Like Him!**

### ***We shall see Him as He is.***

The best thing of all about Heaven is that we will experience the presence of Jesus... without shrinking back in fear... and without the awkwardness. We will approach him, instead, with a life that has nothing to hide... and a heart, unguarded, safe and loved with Him.

Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure

In Heaven, every longing, deep within our souls – to be made whole... and pure... and to be perfected – will be fulfilled.

### ***When He is revealed, we shall be like Him***

- ◇ There are those who were wounded early in life, and have the wounds which still linger in their souls...
- ◇ There are those who are haunted with regret and shame from years (or decades) ago... who long to have this burden lifted from their shoulders.
- ◇ There are those who live in victory, but it is

a running gun battle with the devil – every day it is a battle – they struggle for victory in ways you do not have to... who long for the victory to be finalized and the war to be over.

- ◇ There are people who have things they want to grow out of, who want to be pure... who long to be perfected
- ◇ And there are those Christians with their sights set high, with dreams of becoming this person they have always aspired to grow to become.

In Heaven, every longing, deep within our souls, to be made whole will be fulfilled.

We know the feeling of returning from a long business trip or a prolonged stay in the hospital or such... and entering our own house... and we remark, “Home!”

When one of God’s children passes from this life through the eternal gates... he is... Home! And will *feel at home*... in Heaven.

## ***Heaven is Not a Consolation Prize, Exodus 15:16b-18***

This is a Psalm about God bringing his people into the Promised Land. The Jewish homeland provides a picture of our heavenly home, and points us to that. The New Testament speaks of our “Eternal inheritance.”

### ***We are Part of a Purchased People.***

“Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased.”

In a Triumph, the Lord’s victory parade of the ages, the Father sees, enjoys, and savors the presence of His people whom He has purchased by the blood of Christ.

### ***The Place of the Lord’s Dwelling***

“In the place, O LORD, which You have made For Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O LORD, which Your hands have established.”  
The Tabernacle at Shiloh... The Temple in Je-

rusalem... The Throne Room in Heaven

The point is that God would have a people who would delight in Him and, being made suited to His presence, would enjoy and revel in it.

### ***The Place Where the Lord Reigns***

“The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

We live in an out of control world

With bodies that age and get sick – out of our control

But the day is coming when God will exert His control over the universe and... even now Heaven is a place under the Lord’s control!

### ***A Place of Permanence***

“You will bring them in and plant them”

*Planted* means it doesn’t move. It’s just right and it stays that way! Things are perfectly good and nothing can take us away.

## ***Our Christian Hope, 1 Peter 3:15***

Notice these people will not be asking us a reason for *the faith* that is in us, but for *the hope*.

### ***Hope is a defining word in the Christian life.***

It's one of the "big three" Christian graces: "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three" (1 Corinthians 13:13, NKJV)

### ***Hope is living in light of our future.***

Today is a big day in the life of your family. In fact, \_\_\_\_\_ loss to you is big enough to be considered the second biggest thing today. The very biggest thing today, however, is your Heavenly Hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope." (NASB)

### ***Believers have risked everything on the future.***

We have placed every chip on the second coming of Christ. It affects our ethics - we choose against sinful pleasures of this world in view of eternal pleasures to come. It affects our economics - we choose against storing up treasure on earth in order to store up treasure in heaven. It affects our choices for personal fulfillment - we are not looking to be fulfilled in this life; we expect that the deepest longings of our hearts will be fulfilled only in heaven.

### ***Hope is faith with its eyes on the future.***

There is within the heart of every believer a longing for Heaven. We are "homesick" for Heaven. Down here, we are "weak and wounded, sick and poor." The closer to the

Lord we get the more we see our sins and the more we long for Jesus to come and make us whole.

1 John 3:2-3 "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. And everyone who has *this hope* in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (NKJV)

### ***Hope is the certain expectation and joyful anticipation of the future God has prepared for us in Heaven.***

*It is a certain expectation.* The Heavenly Father always keeps His promises. We're not wishing; we're expecting!

The Bible says, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). Picture in your mind the little boy whose dad is taking him fishing the next morning. They have been talking about this trip for two weeks. He and his dad are getting up early and going fishing the next morning. He has laid out his rod and reel and tackle box. He's all set to go! The little boy is so excited he has trouble getting to sleep. His dad always keeps his promises. They will be going. That little boy is experiencing joyful anticipation.

If we understood all that God has prepared for us... and what it will be like to live unblemished in His presence, whole and healed, we would live our days on the edge of our seats in fevered expectancy!

## ***Paragraph: The Sudden Death of a Fellow-Believer, Psalm 90:12***

Today, we have lost a fellow follower of Christ. It was sudden... a bolt out of the blue... Yet, in spite of the shock and sorrow, this is also a time of great gratitude that we had him. While this day is a chocking reminder of the

uncertainty of life, we should be reminded also that there're things that never change, eternal. And these things are worth investing in.

*Only one life will soon be past*

*Only what's done for Christ will last!*

## ***In Christmas Season, John 14:1***

### ***Four Words:***

#### ***Peace – A very common word this season***

“Let not your heart be troubled”

I say this because there are so many of you this year... in this Christmas Season... experiencing sorrow.

Don't see your sorrow as an intruder in our joyful season – spoiling it forever – Instead, see Christmas as marking the time God intervened in our sorrows – to fix them forever

Because... That is what the incarnation is all about... God became a man and personally came to our rescue.

In so doing, Scripture records, “He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”

Sadness is natural, but in God's presence there is peace

Grief is normal, but Despair is a choice.

“*Let not your heart be troubled*”

2 Thessalonians 3:16: “May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.”

Faith

“You believe in God; believe also in me”

Faith is trusting Jesus no matter what.

And His promises are trustworthy...

“If it were not so, I would have told you.”

*I arise today*

*Through a mighty strength:*

*God's power to guide me,*

*God's might to uphold me,*

*God's eyes to watch over me;*

*God's ear to hear me,*

*God's word to give me speech,*

*God's hand to guard me,  
God's way to lie before me,  
God's shield to shelter me,  
God's host to secure me.*

*[Bridgid of Gael]*

### ***Heaven***

*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. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Whether we leave this world slowly or suddenly, not only is it important to be ready, it is entirely worth it!

*Heaven is a Real place...*

“I go to prepare a place for you”

*It is a Perfect place.*

Revelation 21:4 “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

### ***Jesus***

Vs. 5-6 “Lord,” Thomas said, “we don't know where You're going. How can we know the way?” 6 Jesus told him, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

You are neither alone nor forsaken

Jesus loves you

Jesus cares about you

Jesus is the Way.

## ***A Paragraph on Things We Don't Understand***

*Corrie ten Boone compared it to a cross-stitch which looks like a chaotic mess on one side, but you see the pattern when you flip it over. The Bible affirms there is coming a day when we will know fully, just as to God, we are fully*

*known. Until God flips over the cross-stitch and we can see the pattern... and the Lord gives us full understanding... until then, the hidden things belong to God – and we can trust Him to take care of that which is His own.*

## ***Death After Dementia, 2 Corinthians 4 & 5***

Recent years for \_\_\_\_\_, with her dementia and aging have been very reminiscent of 2 Corinthians, chapters 4 and 5.

### ***This Life is a Life-Long Process of Decay***

4:16 “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” Our outward, physical existence is, in fact, wasting away. ... Spoiled... rusted... moth-eaten... ruined

Even for those with a long life, it first attacks us as children with sicknesses.

Over time, it comes for our vitality. We cannot run as fast or jump as high. Smooth skin is replaced with wrinkles. Silky hair turns gray and then loose. Then come the embarrassing medical tests and hospital stays in the not-so-private gowns. Over time, our shoulders hunch. We cannot think as fast... or always remember. With the increasing care we need, it takes our dignity. And then our life on this earth.

This is all included in the eternal decrees, of course... but, in another sense, it's not the way it's supposed to be.

No wonder, when Jesus is in the presence of death... we read in the Bible's shortest verse: Jesus wept. Our outward man is wasting away. Scripture neither denies it nor minimizes it.

*Here and now, we have treasure*

Vs. 7 “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us”

It's contained in these earthen vessels. But treasure it is!

The gospel message... the forgiveness of sin... the new birth...the indwelling of the Holy Spirit... the adventure of spiritual growth.

Vs. 16 “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day”

### ***There are invisible realities***

Vs. 18 “The things which are unseen”

But those are the things we see by faith... Which draw attention... and upon which we fix our focus.

“As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.”

### ***There are eternal realities***

Vs. 17 “For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”

*The eternal realities are the greater realities!*

*For the Believer, There is an Eternal Home*

5:8 “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

## ***Poems***

### ***Justified Forevermore by John Piper***

[www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/john-piper-poetically-imagines-the-new-heavens-and-the-new-earth/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/john-piper-poetically-imagines-the-new-heavens-and-the-new-earth/)

### ***The Bridgebuilder, by Will Allen Dromgoole***

[www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52702/the-bridge-builder](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52702/the-bridge-builder)

### ***Heaven at Last, by Horatius Bonar***

<https://hymnary.org/text/angel-voices-sweetly-singing-echoes-thro>

## ***A Celebration of Grace***

Every memorial service for a believer is two things:

First, it's a time to honor the memory of the departed and, second, it is a celebration of God's Grace.

### ***We Celebrate Saving Grace***

We're Christians and this is the core of our faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— not from works, so that no one can boast.

*Grace is special treatment given by God to people as a gift, paid for by Jesus, which God enables the unable to receive.*

Romans 11:6: "And if it is by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace"

### ***We Celebrate God's Sustaining Grace***

2 Timothy 2:1: ". . . Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"

*Sustaining Grace is God's timely gift of spiritual strength which protect us from despair and bitterness and empowers us to mature through suffering.*

### ***We Celebrate Celestial Grace***

2 Thessalonians 2:16 "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace"

### ***We Have Responsibilities in Regard to Grace:***

We must *Embrace* the Grace

Hebrews 4:16: "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace"

### ***Closing Blessing of Grace:***

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32)

## ***II Timothy 4:6-8***

### ***There is the Blessing of Recollection***

Vs. 7 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith

[Personal remarks here]

### ***There is the Readiness of Preparation***

Vs. 6 "For I am now ready"

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. How important it is to be a prepared person!

### ***There is the Joy of Anticipation***

"The time of my departure is at hand"

The word picture is of a ship casting off the ropes and setting sail.

Going to Heaven isn't like leaving town with a stranger, but going on a luxury cruise with your best friend.

[Heaven at Last]

## ***Funerals are for the Living***

*It has often been said that funerals are for the living. So, what are we gathered here to do today? Five very short thoughts:*

### ***It's a Time to Remember***

*God remembers.*

*Hebrews 6:10 "For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do."*

*He will not forget. And if God will not forget, neither should we.*

[Memories and remarks here]

### ***It's a Time to be Reassured***

*Sometimes, when great sorrow enters our world, we may get the impression that God has done nothing about our suffering. But the Bible says differently. God has not done nothing; He has done something!*

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

### ***It is a Time to Reflect:***

*It is a big thing when a person, created in the image of God – a unique human being with great significance - passes from this planet into eternity. It is so overwhelming a reality, that sometimes we go into denial, and paper it over with little white lies. But we all have this*

*appointment. Psalm 90:12 says, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

*God has given us time. But, if we try to live without taking our own mortality into consideration... or matters of eternity*

*If we try to live life with reference to God*

*We cannot live it nearly as wisely*

*So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.*

### ***It is a Time for Fresh Starts***

*What I mean is, some of you have moved up a chair in your family. The mantle has been passed to you. It's a new beginning.*

*God is all about new beginnings and fresh starts.*

*The new birth is the ultimate fresh start!*

*The Bible says, "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17*

*One more thought...*

### ***God will Be There for You***

*Hebrews 13:5 "He Himself has said, I will never leave you or forsake you.*

*James 4:8 "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."*

## ***Romans 8***

### ***You Have to Do the Math vs. 18***

*"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

*Compare the greater to the lesser; the eternal to the temporary.*

### ***You Have to Stick to the Game Plan vs. 25***

*"But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."*

***When You Don't Know What to Say When You Pray, The Holy Spirit Will Translate Your Prayers into the Language of Heaven for You vs. 26***

***Scoot Up Close to the Inseparable Love of Christ vs. 38 "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***



## ***Community Tragedy, Deuteronomy 29:29***

At times like this, it is only natural that our hearts want an explanation that our minds cannot provide. There is so much we do not understand.

Why do some die young?

Why do some face such great sorrow?

Why do these awful tragedies occur?

The answers are hidden...

The Bible tells us:

The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever... (Deuteronomy 29:29)

There are things that, at the present time, are hidden. And there are things which are revealed. The questions we cannot answer are the hidden things – they belong to God.

Other things are revealed; those things belong to God's people. He has given them to us.

What are those revealed things that belong to us?

Corrie ten Boone compared it to a cross-stitch which looks like a chaotic mess on one side, but you see the pattern when you flip it over. The Bible affirms there is coming a day when we will know fully, just as to God, we are fully known. Until God flips over the cross-stitch and we can see the pattern... and the Lord gives us full understanding... until then, the hidden things belong to God – and we can trust Him to take care of that which is His own.

***First, there is God's Promise That He Will Write the Final Chapter.***

There is coming a day when we will never face another day like today. In the next world, God will set things right. He will right the wrongs and heal the hurts.

Revelation 21:1-4 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... Look! God's

dwelling is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away.”

***God Promises, That if You Face a Severe Blow, He Will Help You***

Psalm 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”

As we discuss this horrific heartbreak today, it may be reminding you of something else that is hurting you inside, very terribly. You may have some grief of your own bubbling up inside you – if so, that is normal. But, if you need them, there will be people here today who can talk with you about it and listen to your story, no matter what it is.

God rarely answers the question, “Why did this happen?” But He will answer the question, “What now?”

And with God's grace, you can take the next steps.

*“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13*

***Third, is the Promise of Eternal Life***

What we face today serves to remind us that how we die is not as important as where we go after we die.

Romans 6:23 “The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

*But no gift is yours until you accept it.*

## ***Reasons Christians Long for Heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10***

Vs. 2 “For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling”

### ***We Will Be With the Lord***

Vs. 6 “So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord”

Vs. 8 “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”

[Man for whom the death angel came – insisted on carrying a suitcase full of gold with him to heaven. Angels bemused – “What’s that man carrying a suitcase full of pavement for?”]

The attraction of heaven isn’t the building materials. *The attraction of heaven for believers is to be with the Lord.*

Bored people, who are bored with God, feel they would find heaven boring. But people who have experienced the new birth, love the Lord and enjoy the Lord, and want to be with the Lord!

### ***We Will Be Changed***

Vs. 4 “...so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”

1 Corinthians 15:50-52

*I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.*

### ***We Will Be Changed Physically***

Vs. 4 “We groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed”

In that day, an inner garment and an outer garment. He is saying he looks forward to slipping into the outer garment of his glorified body. To be overclothed with his glorified

body.

Vs. 2 “For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling”

### ***The problems of tent life:***

- ◇ A tent can be blown away in the wind.
- ◇ A tent can leak when it rains.
- ◇ A tent isn’t a secure structure – you can’t lock your doors at night.
- ◇ A tent is an impermanent place, as are our physical lives.

The following is the epitaph of Benjamin Franklin. He himself wrote it several years before his death on April 17, 1790:

THE BODY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRINTER, (LIKE THE COVER OF AN OLD BOOK, ITS CONTENTS TORN OUT, AND STRIPT OF ITS LETTERING AND GILDING,) LIES HERE, FOOD FOR WORMS; YET THE WORK ITSELF SHALL NOT BE LOST, FOR IT WILL (AS HE BELIEVED) APPEAR ONCE MORE IN A NEW AND MORE BEAUTIFUL EDITION, CORRECTED AND AMENDED BY THE AUTHOR.

This change is more than external and physical...

### ***We Will Be Changed Spiritually***

Vs. 4 “...so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life”

It’s not just the lifestyle attending church and Bible study, it’s spiritual life – an internal dynamic, a new power, a new set of desires which renovate our *want to— life!*

That’s why Christians *want...*

Vs. 9 “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.”

On that day, our deepest dreams are fulfilled.

### ***We Will Be Home***

Vs. 8 “Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and *at home with the Lord.*” Those who feel at home with the Lord on earth will be at home with Him forever, in Heaven.

## ***Reasons Christians Long for Heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10***

### ***Jesus understands what a day like this is like.***

*It is a time of questions*

21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

We often have the "If only questions"

"If only's"

Her question boils down to:

"Where is Jesus when you need Him?"

We ask "Why?"

*Perhaps there is another question to ask – that question is "What now?"*

### ***It is a time of deep grief***

33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, *He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.*

34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 *Jesus wept.*

We often feel like death is an intruder into our lives, that it is unnatural, that it is not supposed to be...

So we tell ourselves that it is a natural part of life... we are born, we live, and we die.

Jesus didn't see it that way! Jesus also considered death unnatural, an intruder, an enemy!

In the presence of death, "Jesus groaned in His spirit and was troubled"

### ***It is a time for affirmations***

21 Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 'But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.'

Martha gets a bad rap. But it was Martha who said this! She was the one with the insight into what Jesus was able to do – in fact, about to do, even now. Martha affirmed it.

23 Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

24 Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.'

25 Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.'

Jesus doesn't just promise resurrections, or perform the occasional resurrection. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Let us affirm that while it may appear at this moment that Jesus has not done anything about this... He has not done nothing, He has done something!

43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!'

44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'

John 5:28-29 "Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out..."

## ***II Kings 2***

### ***The Time That Had Come***

Vs. 1 “The time had come for the LORD to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind”

### ***Love that Won't Leave***

Vs. 2 “and Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the LORD is sending me on to Bethel.” But Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

Vs. 4 “Elijah said to him, ‘Elisha, stay here; the LORD is sending me to Jericho.’ But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.”

Vs. 6 “Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here; the LORD is sending me to the Jordan.’ But Elisha said, ‘As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on.”

### ***A Glorious Reality***

Vs. 11 As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire with horses of fire suddenly appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went up into heaven in the whirlwind.

*Eyes to See...*

Vs. 9-10 “Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken from you.”

So Elisha answered, ‘Please, let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.’ Elijah

replied, ‘You have asked for something difficult. If you see me being taken from you, you will have it. If not, you won’t.’”

12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" (NASB)

### ***We Can See the Spiritual Realities and Still Grieve***

12 ...And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress. (NLT)

### ***The Mantle that Falls to Us***

13 Elisha picked up the mantle [cloak] that had fallen off Elijah and went back .

- ◇ Example of his life
- ◇ Words of wisdom & insight
- ◇ Love & confidence imparted to us from earliest years

Most importantly, faith (and not faith in faith or in general, but faith in Jesus Christ)

Our Duty: “Elisha picked up the mantle”

### ***The Power in These Things Come Back to Help Us***

14 Then he took the mantle Elijah had dropped and struck the waters. “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” he asked. He struck the waters himself, and they parted to the right and the left, and Elisha crossed over.

[The Bridge Builder]

## ***A Paragraph on Surpassing Glory***

*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17)*

Glory, of course, is when the invisible qualities of the invisible God are made visible.

When all His goodness and holiness, when all His love and justice, when all His compassion and power are *fully revealed*.

These glories of Heaven have an eternal weight.

And the glories of being glorified – with a glorified body... and a glorified soul... and a heart upgraded to enjoy God to a most surprising degree!

## ***Psalm 23 — For a Family Losing a Loved One after Long Suffering***

We are reminded today of things that bring reassurance and comfort.

### ***First, We Have Already Seen How God Sees Us Through***

You have been through a long and dark valley. You have experienced some hard things. And yet, the Lord has seen you through them all. Psalm 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me”

Even when it feels absolutely overwhelming, God promises:

Isaiah 43:2 “I will be with you when you pass through the waters, and when you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you.”

God has seen you through these long months... He will see you through now.

When you're down to Jesus, when Jesus is all you've got, you discover Jesus is enough.

### ***We are Also Reminded of the Difference a Personal Relationship with God Makes***

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

*Gracious Father,*

*It is with abiding thanksgiving*

*And with, what we hope, is a proper measure of pride that we've honored \_\_\_\_\_ memory today. ...We had a lot to be proud of.*

*We are grateful that You gave her to us--to our family and to this church—for these many years.*

*We are so thankful for Your grace that saved her and Your empowering grace, which enabled her to serve You through Your church.*

### ***We are Reminded How the Lord will Lift Us Up***

This has been a draining time for you, physically and emotionally...

3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

*When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it. – Spurgeon*

*And then, we see...*

### ***The Lord has Prepared Better Things for the Future.***

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.

6 ...And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

*And in these days ahead...*

### ***God Will Be Faithful to You and Good***

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life

## ***A Prayer***

*Thank You for Your lavish promises concerning Heaven and the age to come. They comfort us today.*

*Now help us that we might remember the lessons of her life's example...*

*The principles of the Scriptures she taught us... And walk with You in relationship... as faithful servants.*

*In Jesus' name we pray,*

*Amen*

## ***II Peter 3:3-4, 8-14***

Vs. 12 “...you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God...”

You have been through a hard time and have seen hard things, but God is not going to leave us in this fix!

### ***What We’re Waiting for is a Really Big Deal!***

Vs. 13 “Based on His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell.”

There will no longer be any unrighteousness then... or any of the sad things or sickness or death that sin brought into the world. It’s a new world where righteousness will rule the day in joy.

### ***God is going to renovate all creation to do it...***

Vs. 10 “the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth”

### ***God is Going to Fix All This in His Own Time***

Vs. 8 “with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years like one day.”

### ***Right Now, God is Giving Us Time***

Vs. 9 “The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance”

For example, \_\_\_ was saved at age \_\_\_ – when he discovered that nice guys need Jesus, too.

### ***You Can Count on God’s Promises***

Vs. 12 “The Lord does not delay His promise”

You can count on His promises for comfort and for peace and for His love and for strength.

### ***How to Wait Until Then***

Vs. 14 “...while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found in peace without spot or blemish before Him.”

## ***Grief is Our Most Complicated Emotion***

*We think of grief as one of our emotions, but grief is a group of emotions... sometimes seemingly contradictory emotions.*

- ◇ *Even when life is long, it feels cut short.*
- ◇ *Even when the end is expected, death seems sudden.*
- ◇ *When suffering was long, we feel relief... and then feel guilty for feeling the relief.*
- ◇ *We can be grateful for the one we lost... and proud of them... and still feel something was withheld.*
- ◇ *We mourn the loss of the things we had together...*
- ◇ *...and the absence of the things that should have been, that we should have had.*
- ◇ *There can be love for the person we lost...*

*and anger at them... all at the same time.*

- ◇ *We can rejoice for a loved one in going home to be with the Lord... sincerely so...*
- ◇ *And still be upset with the Lord for taking them away.*

Truly, grief is our most complicated emotion.

While time helps us process and sort through these varying emotions, the grace of God helps us process our feelings *better*.

There is a Divine enablement...

We are given a bigger perspective...

A wider angle... A long-term view.

By God’s grace, we stand at the balcony and see things more from a Heaven’s-eye point of view.

## ***Community Tragedy, Deuteronomy 29:29***

Abraham was a traveling man. We read in that great roll call of the faithful in Hebrews 11, a description of the man the Bible describes as a model of faith.

Like Abraham our lives are measured by:

- ◇ *What we believe and embrace*
- ◇ *What we see and are persuaded of*
- ◇ *What we confess and declare*
- ◇ *What we desire and seek*

“God... hath prepared for them a City”

Sort of like Abraham, \_\_\_\_\_ lived with a permanent impermanence. But, his life-goal was something eternal...

Like Abraham, we should look “for a city which hath foundations.”

### ***This city offers permanence***

The problem in life is that we can never get everything just right – and keep it there.

This world is a permanent impermanence.  
But heaven is a place with foundations.  
Things don't move under your feet.

### ***This city offers improvements***

“But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” one.

### ***This city has a large population***

Population is part of the definition of a city. All who know Jesus and have gone on before us will meet us there.

And most importantly, we will enjoy the presence of Jesus in His city.

### ***This city required preparation***

“He hath prepared for them a city”

Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you.”

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

## ***A Prayer on the Occasion of a Sudden Loss***

*O Lord! We bring to You today our shock and sudden sorrow... asking You to take notice of it. We do not understand it. We do not like it – we do not hide it. We are overwhelmed by it.*

*We bring to You our doubts, our anger, and our hurt. Please look down upon us and hear us. By faith, we choose to draw near to You.*

*We are helpless without You. You only can help us. Without You, the grief and pain in our hearts is too great to bear.*

*Today, by faith, we choose to remember that death is not only our enemy, but also Your enemy. That on Your calendar is a date certain when this last enemy will be destroyed... just as there is a date set to create a new order – when You will wipe away every tear from our eyes.*

*We do know... that You know... how it feels... that You do care. You are doing something about it. That is why Jesus the Messiah came into the world. Help us today to remember this in our hearts, as well as our minds.*

*We want to acknowledge Your goodness in giving \_\_\_ to us for even one day. We gave thanks that we have had him in our lives as a husband, father, son, friend. Many have had much, much less.*

*As a congregation, we pray that You will cause this family...*

*To feel Your presence running to them.*

*Your comfort upholding them.*

*Your strength flowing into them.*

*Your promises – the true truths of ultimate reality – speaking within them.*

*In Jesus' name we ask it, Amen*