



HOW TO DO THE FUNERAL OF A BABY

(Note: This funeral was conducted for a five month old child.)

The Bible says, “There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” As I look around this building today I realize that these parents have a lot of very special friends....friends who will stick even closer than a brother.

I told this young mother last night that none of us can change what has happened...none of us can lift the burden or take away the pain...but what we can do is make certain that these parents are surrounded with friends and that all of us go through this experience together.

Four weeks ago I stood in this very spot and had the funeral of my wife’s aunt. She was a wonderful 96 year old lady. I talked about the fact that her days were full to the brim...that she had lived a full life. All of us understood that...we were able to accept that 96 year old people do indeed die.

But all of us struggle when we come to a day like today, because days like today are not supposed to happen.

I believe the Grand Canyon describes our current experience very well. A park ranger described the Grand Canyon by saying, “The Grand Canyon is eight miles down but it feels like it’s eighty miles back.” In other words, you go down a lot faster than you come back.

Today some of us feel as if we’re so far down in the canyon of sorrow and hurt that we’ll never make it all the way back.

But I want you to know there is a way out of even this canyon...and there is someone very special who wants to take us by the hand and lead us out of this canyon.

The Bible describes our journey like this, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For Thou...you who are my God and my Savior Jesus Christ, are with me.”

The songwriter said,

*“There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God.
A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God.*

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, yes, hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God.”*

God wants to hold each one of us today. Let's talk to Him about it.

(Opening prayer for the family)

The 121st Psalm is a great Psalm for any day but especially for a day like today. That Psalm was written by King David of Israel. That is significant because King David lost his own son when that son was only seven days old.

In other words, there was a day when David sat where we now sit and he wrote,

I look up to the hills,
but where does my help come from?
² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

(In other words, David's help did not come from the hills. His help came from the one who made the hills.)

³ The Lord will not let you be defeated.
He who guards you never sleeps.
⁴ He who guards Israel never rests or sleeps.
⁵ The LORD guards you.
The LORD is the shade that protects you from the sun.
⁶ The sun cannot hurt you during the day,
and the moon cannot hurt you at night.
⁷ The LORD will protect you from all dangers;
he will guard your life.
⁸ The LORD will guard you as you come and go,
both now and forever.

They say the book of Psalms is the most read Book in the entire Bible. That is probably so because the book of Psalms is written by hurting people for other hurting people.

Psalm 121 makes it clear, though, that God is big enough to take care of our heart, even when David lost his seven day old son...even when we go through the very same experience.

Sometimes we forget that God designed us to grieve at times like this. There are some people who believe it is wrong to grieve at a funeral. According to them we shouldn't cry, but we should instead rejoice and talk about heaven. They say, "Let's have a celebration service instead of a mourning service."

But let's be honest. A celebration service may be okay at times, but let me remind you that God designed us to grieve when bad times comes. Sometimes a mourning service is the most important service of all.

The Bible tells us about Job's eyes "pouring out tears to his God." You may remember that Job lost all ten of his children. The Bible tells us about the Savior weeping, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" The Bible tells us about Him weeping at the graveside of His friend Lazarus. That experience tells me if Jesus was man enough to cry then it's okay for me to cry, too!

The Bible tells us also about David "watering his couch with his tears."

One Bible passage describes Jesus as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief just like the grief we are experiencing today.

Do you know why we grieve? We grieve because we love so much that we allow ourselves to be hurt.

One person said, "I don't want to get hurt so I will never love anyone." That person is missing a lot of love because there will always be more love than hurt.

Today really hurts but the joy of having this lovely baby for five months will eventually be greater than all of our hurt.

As a matter of fact, God even encourages us to grieve at times like this. In one case, God encouraged Israel to weep thirty days when Moses died. God knew they needed a thirty day funeral service to express their feelings!

But at the same time the Bible says, "Do not grieve or sorrow as those who have no hope. Instead, comfort one another with these words." It does not say, "Sorrow not at all," but it says when you sorrow please remember today's sorrowing is not the end!

There will someday come a better day when God resurrects the dead.

Someone asked, "What happened to our little baby? Where is she today? How can you have any hope on a day like today?"

I mentioned earlier that David lost his own son when the son was seven days old. David then wrote this in the Bible. "I cannot bring my son back to me in this world but I can go to my son in the next world."

The question has to be asked, "Where, though, was David going?" David answered that question in the 23rd Psalm. Do you remember how Psalm 23 ends?

It ends with David saying, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Where was David going in the next life? He was going to the house of the Lord and David said wherever I am going is the same place my son will be. In other words, when I walk through the gates of heaven I will be met by my son!

Where then is this baby? She is dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.

So do we have a right to grieve? Yes! But the Bible helps us grieve with the hope of a better day.

So let us mourn...let us grieve...but let us also remember there will be a better day!

Let me remind you also that God has sat where we now sit. It is easy to second guess God when we come to a day like today.

I read about a father who lost his son in a traffic accident. Someone drove through a red light and killed his son. This man went to his pastor and in his hurt he said, "Where was God when my son died?" The pastor put his arm around the father and said, "God was exactly where He was when His own Son died for the sins of the whole world."

I happen to be the father of three beautiful young ladies. I cannot imagine sacrificing even one of my children for someone else. But God felt the pain of losing His only begotten Son...of seeing His own Son suffer one of the most horrible deaths ever invented by mankind.

Why did God allow that to happen? It is because man had sinned and come short of the glory of God. That meant hell was our home...but the cross was God's fire escape.

The greatest verse in the Bible is John 3:16. That verse says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

My only hope of heaven is Jesus. My hope is not in my religion but rather my hope is in Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." And it all begins with the phrase in John 3:16 where "God freely and willingly gave..."

God knew what it was to give His very best! That means God knows what you are going through, because He has experienced the very same hurt that you are experiencing today.

That's why the Bible says, "For our high priest is able to understand our weaknesses. Let us, then, feel very sure that we can come before God's throne where there is grace. There we can receive mercy and grace to help us when we need it." (Hebrews 4:14, NCV)

I don't know about you, but I think we need a lot of mercy and grace today. The wonderful thing about God's throne is that there's always plenty of mercy and grace.

The poet asked,

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for laughter and song?
When my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it anything to Him? Does He see?
Oh, yes He cares. I know He cares.
His heart is touched with my grief.
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Savior cares.

Let me encourage you to talk to Him today. Talk to Him tonight when everyone has gone to bed. Psalm 121 says He is the God who never sleeps. In other words, His throne is always open to you.

Let me say one more thing to everyone. I hope you will listen closely to what I am now about to say.

God is the only One who can make sense out of today.

Quite honestly, today does not make any sense to me nor to you nor to the smartest philosophers in our land. There are seven billion people on planet earth at this particular time. That means there are probably seven billion people smarter than me!

I can ask all seven billion people, "Explain today to me," but not one person can explain today to me. Not a single one!

The only person who can explain today is God Himself. Someday God will explain today to each one of us. The Bible says there is coming a day when we shall know as we are known...a day when God will make everything plain.

I believe one of the greatest joys of heaven will be when God finally answers the question of, "WHY." I don't know about you but I have asked "Why?" so many times that I have lost count.

The good thing is that God never gets upset with me for asking why. He just says, "Someday you'll understand. So come now and let us reason together. For my thoughts are higher than your thoughts and My ways are much higher than your ways. Someday – not now but someday – you'll understand."

When I was a little boy I would crawl up on dad's lap and ask, "Why?" and dad would very patiently explain why.

Maybe God will let me do that in heaven also. He'll say, "Come here, Tom. It's time you learn the reason why."

Remember this: God is the only One who can make sense out of today....the only one who really knows who I am and why I exist and where I am going and how I am going to get there.

If I leave Jesus out of my life then life will never make any sense. I can try everything in this world but it will never satisfy.

One of the very first Roman Catholic scholars – his name was Augustine - said it like this, “You, God, have made us for Yourself and our souls are restless until they find their rest in You.”

Let me read you a paragraph from *The Purpose Driven Life*. Except for the Bible, this book is the greatest book ever written. “Andrei Bitov, a Russian novelist, grew up under an atheistic Communist regime. But God got his attention one dreary day. He recalls, ‘In my 27th year, while riding the metro in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) I was overcome with a despair so great that life seemed to stop at once, preempting the future entirely, let alone any meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a phrase appeared: *Without God life makes no sense*. Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro, and walked into God’s light.’”

The preacher Jack Hyles wrote the poem,

*I have sat beside a tiny crib, And watched a baby die,
As parents slowly turned to me, And asked, "O Pastor, why?"*

*I have held the youthful husband's head, And felt death's heave and sigh.
A widow looked through tears and said, "Dear Pastor, tell me, Why?"*

*I have seen a gold-star mother weep, And hold a picture nigh Her lonely
breast, and softly ask, "Why, Pastor, why, oh why?"*

*I have walked away from Babyland, Where stillborn babies lie. A mother
stretches empty arms And asks me, "Pastor, why?"*

*I have heard the white-tipped tapping canes, Which leads the blinded eye.
And then a darkened, lonely voice cries, "Preacher, show me why."*

*I have caught a fiancée's burning tears, And heard her lonely cry.
She held an unused wedding gown, And shouted, "Pastor, why?"*

*I have heard the cancer patient say, "Tis gain for me to die";
Then look into his daughter's face, And mutely whisper, "Why?"*

*I have seen a father take his life. A widow stands nearby;
As little children say, "Dear Mom, The Preacher will tell us why."*

*I've heard an orphan faintly say, Who gazed into the sky,
"Tho' Mom and Dad have gone away, My preacher will know why."*

*I tiptoed to my Father's throne, So timid and so shy,
To say, "Dear God, some of Your own Are wanting to know Why."*

*I heard Him say so tenderly, "Their eyes I'll gladly dry,
Tho' they must look through faith today, Tomorrow they'll know why.
If now they find the reasons that Their hopes have gone awry,
In Heaven, they will miss the joy Of hearing Me tell why."*

*And so I've found it pleases Him When I can testify,
"I'll trust my God to do what's best, And wait to find out why."*