

1. Bob's life

- a. I tried to arrange to have the funeral director wheel Bob's casket in to the service about halfway through the sermon. I figured, in life, that was when Bob would arrive at church. Why pretend it was any different now at his death?
- b. While this is indeed a sad day as we say goodbye to a loving father, a good friend, a great man; Bob was truly blessed in his last few months. As he lay on his couch at home, then later in his bed in hospice, there was such a flow of people through to express their love for him that he knew how blessed his life had been. And it wasn't just a few people.
  - i. Kathi Kan was at his side, holding his hand and taking care of every important detail of his day to day life. The only time she would leave him was generally to go to church or to go to sleep.
  - ii. Likewise, Bob Nicol was there doing things that he will never tell anyone he did, and I won't embarrass him by sharing any details. I will just say that he showed what it means to be a friend.
  - iii. Ernie Mainland brought him communion every day at 5 PM.
  - iv. The list of people who came- whether once, regularly, or daily, was so great that the hospice center actually had to establish a visitation policy for the first time. Bob wasn't alone, even in death, but was truly loved and cared for until his last breath.
- c. I have heard it said that you don't determine the value of one's life by the number of people they love, but by the number of people who love them. While I understand this sentiment in one respect, that the way people feel about you is ultimately a reflection of the kind of person you are; I think this whole sentiment misses the point.
- d. Life, especially the Christian life, is most certainly more about the amount of love we give than it is about the love we receive in return. This is most evident in the life of Jesus himself. It was his love for all of us, in spite of rejection by his own people that led him to die for our sins.
- e. This is something that epitomized Bob's life. He didn't live his life for amassing the love and adoration of others. Instead he saw value in each person. He loved them for who they were. He didn't define people by their flaws or their shortcomings. He saw God's image in all humanity and treated everyone with love, respect, and dignity. Bob's life wasn't about the love he received, but by the love he gave. And he gave it charitably, liberally, and without discrimination.
- f. How much more could this be evidenced than by Bob's knack for making every person he knew feel like a close and personal friend. I don't know if he had many acquaintances. He had a way of making the most casual acquaintance feel like someone he had known for years.
- g. This is one of the reasons why the loss of Bob is so overwhelming. It isn't just a loss to his family. It isn't just a loss to Kathi. It isn't just a loss to New Life Anglican Church. It is a loss to anyone and everyone who had crossed paths with

him. I can say this with certainty as someone who only knew him for about a year and a half. To know Bob was to be made a better person for having known him.

## 2. Bob's faith

- a. It was no accident that Bob was as kind, generous and loving as he was. It was no accident that he cared so deeply about people. It was all a reflection of his deeply held Christian faith.
- b. In planning this service with Bob, it was the object of his faith that he wanted to be front and center. We are singing "Lift High the Cross" as the recessional because Bob thought it would be so majestic and God honoring to have everyone focused, not on him, but on the Cross of Christ on such an occasion as this.
- c. Bob's faith was so strong, so deep, and such an integral part of his very being, that when he felt his previous church home had gone in a direction that he couldn't go, he laid the ground work, and with the help of a few friends, he started New Life Anglican Church. He didn't do it for himself. He did it because he wanted to provide a place where he felt the historic Christian faith could be passed on according to the traditions he had grown up with. He did it because it was meaningful to him that there was a place for people to hear the gospel and to worship God in Spirit and Truth.
- d. Not only did he do the work of forming a church. He was a part of every facet of it. He never passed a job off to another. Instead, he invited the work for himself. He would do what needed done, if he was able. He would provide the means for another to do it if he wasn't able. He attended every class. He attended every activity. He attended every service.
- e. All of this is simply a reflection of just how much his faith in Jesus truly meant to him. It was that faith that caused him to see so much good in the world and in everyone. It was the hope we have in the Cross of Christ, the hope of a God who wants better for this world, that caused Bob to see the best in others. He knew with a certainty, that no matter what trials awaited, God surely has some ultimate good in store for his creation.

## 3. Bob's death

- a. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted... a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." This passage from Ecclesiastes (3:1-4) meant so much to Bob after his brother's funeral early this summer.
- b. After returning home from that service he kept bringing this passage up and talking about how deep it is and how it gives us such a perspective on the nature of life. He recognized that while his brother was gone from here, he wasn't gone for good. And he understood that there was a season for everything.
- c. Unfortunately, it wouldn't be long before the season of Bob's own life would change. After struggling with a severe cough for several weeks, in early August Bob finally found out that his season had changed. He found out that he had an untreatable form of Leukemia and that his time was near an end.
- d. Again he returned to this passage. For everything there is a season. He understood that God had given him various seasons of life. There had been a time to be born, a time to dance, a time to plant, a time for of robust and healthy life, a

time of great service to the community, a time of world traveling, water skiing, playing with grandchildren, being a Rotarian, serving in his church.

- e. Then the season changed. He passed from the season of life to the time for death. His time winding down, the last few months of his season of life were spent allowing friends their time to weep; allowing family their time to mourn; allowing all those around him a time to embrace him, to say their goodbyes, and to make peace with his death.
  - f. Yet, in all this, he never requested his own time to mourn or to weep. He met his end with the same dignity and class with which he lived his life. While everyone else went through the stages of grief and the season of his death, Bob held tight to the joy of certain hope in Christ.
4. Bob's eternal future
- a. His focus became Jesus' words, "This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."
  - b. In life, Bob taught so many how to live a full, good and godly life. But his final lesson was in how to die. He never asked, "Why me?" He never sat in self-pity. He never thought he got the short end of the stick. He simply said, "I am so at peace with this. God has given me such a peace." And that peace was because he knew that soon he would be living with his eternal reward.
  - c. As others came to him weeping and mourning, Bob would smile, make jokes, indulge everyone in whatever they felt they needed to say. And he showed us what the peace of God which passes all understanding truly is.
  - d. My prayer for Bob each day of the more than two months of facing death, was that God would comfort him with his Spirit and remind him that even as he was fading from this world, he was being brought into the next. He is now in the next world. He is in the Kingdom of God. He has been given his seat at the heavenly feast.
  - e. I often think about the words of George Whitefield regarding John Wesley. They disagreed on a great number of theological issues and were both prominent evangelists. Once Whitefield was asked whether or not he thought he'd see Wesley in heaven and he responded, "No, for he will be far too close to the throne of God for me to ever hope to catch a glimpse."
  - f. These are my thoughts on Bob. As far as saints go, he did so much for the kingdom; he loved God so much, that he will surely be too close to the throne for me to ever catch a glimpse.
  - g. But should any of us ever want to see him again, we must commit ourselves to that same hope that he had- the hope of Christ as savior. That Jesus had died on the cross for our sins, rose from the dead, destroying death, and had ascended to the Father to prepare a place for us.
  - h. For it is as Jesus taught, and as Bob whole heartedly believed, "This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." It is my desire, it was Bob's desire, and it is indeed the desire of the Father in heaven, that each of you will come to the same Son, believe in him for eternal life, and let him raise you up on the last day.