

1. Bob's suffering
  - a. One of the saddest and hardest things for me as a pastor is to do a funeral for someone I didn't know. In this case, Bob was someone who was already beyond my getting to know thanks to Alzheimer's disease. Luckily there was some family here to share a little about Bob for us today.
  - b. Because they shared their words about what Bob meant to them, and I am sure many of you have similar stories and memories, I would like to talk about something else. I would mainly like to take just a few minutes to provide some words of comfort for Betty who was so loving to take care of Bob even in the midst of such a difficult illness.
  - c. Betty told me that Bob struggled with the visible signs of Alzheimer's for the last seven or eight years. That is a long time to watch a loved one slowly become a shell of himself. I know it wasn't easy for Betty to watch Bob deteriorate, especially at the point where he didn't know who she was anymore.
  - d. Betty told me that she had prayed to God that he would take Bob. This is perfectly understandable. In his state, he didn't really have a life. And there is nothing wrong with calling on God to show mercy to his servant and bring him home.
  - e. What I want Betty and all of Bob's family to remember is that Bob was and always will be the man they knew their whole lives prior to his disease. While Alzheimer's may have robbed him of his memory, it didn't change who he had been all those years. When the dust settles from all of this, it will be the memories of Bob the father, husband and friend that will stand out.
  - f. In watching people deal with such struggles, I always find the words of Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians to be of great comfort.
    - i. "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."
  - g. Even though Bob was wasting away on the outside; even though his decline was evident to the naked eye, we can have faith that God was continually renewing Bob's spirit day by day. He did not leave him alone in his illness, and he hasn't left Bob alone now in his death. Despite how dramatic and traumatic Alzheimer's can be, and certainly was for Bob and his family, in the grand scheme of eternity, it was a mere slight, momentary affliction producing in Bob an eternal weight of glory.
  - h. Bob's reward
  - i. As Christians we know that we are in full dependence upon God. If we depend on God for everything in health, then we know that God is there when we are ill. In light of that, we know from Paul's words that suffering and illness do not leave

us alone and empty, but they allow God to draw near to us. Thus we can be sure of Paul's words that we don't look at what can be seen but what cannot, because what can be seen is temporary and what cannot is eternal. Bob's illness, his suffering, that was all temporary.

- j. But his love of God, and God's faithfulness to him, that is eternal. And because of that, we can trust that Bob is living in a fully restored state with the Father. He is no longer in an earthly tent that can be destroyed, but he is in the fullness of the presence of God where there is no more death or sorrow, nor sickness, nor suffering. And despite his long illness, he remembers everything that matters now. He remembers his love, his life, and his God.

## 2. Our hope

- a. Bob is living with his heavenly reward for a life of faith. And we all have this same opportunity. While we are still of sound mind and body, each of us is in a position to come to know the Lord, to find forgiveness for our sins in Christ Jesus, and to have the faith in that which is unseen that leads to eternal life.
- b. It is that faith which can bring us salvation of our souls, and it is that same faith which can comfort us in the loss of a loved one such as Bob. Because we know that when we have faith in God's love through Christ, then God is faithful to us to forgive us our sins, to renew our spirit's, and to draw us back to himself so that we can spend an eternity with him.
- c. Bob's slight momentary affliction helped produce in him an eternal weight of glory. May each of us know that same glory in Christ.