

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge
Sermon- Norm Burk's Memorial
Saturday, July 9, 2011

1. Norm's Life

- a. I find myself in the unfortunate circumstance of having never met Norm, so it is hard for me to say a lot about his life. Most of you here today knew Norm on some level, so I look forward to getting to hear some stories about him. I would like to thank Lou for giving that Eulogy and the reason why I had him do that was because he knew Norm and it allowed someone who knew and loved him to give a genuine reflection on his life.
- b. That said, it is clear that Norm was a good man much loved by many people and by this church in particular. Even without having met him, I knew about him because we had been praying for his health from the time I was called to New Life until his passing. This community has a knack for keeping its friends and family close to their hearts, even if they are across the country. So I knew that Norm was a man who had made an impact on people, because the people here have cared deeply and had prayed fervently for him.
- c. From what I understand Norm was a skier- and ski instructor. He was an outdoorsman who enjoyed nature and the beauty of God's creation. And he was a good man who cared about people.

2. Norm's Eternal Future

- a. I also understand that Norm was a committed Anglican and that his experience in this community started at Emmanuel Episcopal Church and then followed here to New Life as one of the earliest people to bring his family and join us.
- b. No Anglican journey would be complete without at least one stint on vestry, so of course Norm served his time. But he did more than just attend church and fill his "duty" on vestry. He was also instrumental in forming and running the church toffee making committee that has raised thousands of dollars over the years- first at Emmanuel and then here. That many has been used for important service ministries and outreach throughout the community.
- c. I will admit that when I read in the account of Norm's life that Di sent me I got a laugh out of him being in the church choir even though he was tone deaf. At my last church, everyone was tone deaf and no one seemed to sing any of the songs. I spent a lot of time trying to convince them that our singing is part of our heart-felt worship to God. He doesn't require opera singers. He requires humble and joyful hearts reach out in praise to him. Norm seemed to understand this and was willing to sing despite lacking the perfect pitch he might have aspired to.
- d. Sadly for Norm and for those who loved him and had to watch him suffer, his life isn't just a collection of good and funny stories. It is one that ended in suffering and pain. Norm had a lengthy battle with pancreatic cancer that wasn't easy on him. In the end he was in hospice where they were able to help him to control his pain and die with dignity. But cancer leaves little dignity left for its victims.
- e. But as Christians, we aren't defined by the good and joyful stories people tell about us at our funerals. We aren't defined by the suffering and pain that we face

in our lives and even in death. We are defined by Christ's love for us as expressed on the cross- a cross of shame and suffering.

- f. Jesus knew suffering just as Norm did. And whether Norm was aware or not, Jesus, who suffered for Norm- and for you and me- was suffering at Norm's side every step of the way. And in those moments just after his passing here, Jesus was proud to stand beside Norm and call him brother; to stand before the Father in heaven, reveal his own wounds from the cross, and proclaim Norm as one covered by his blood and his sacrifice.
 - a. The apostle Paul said, "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."
 - g. Paul wrote those words in the midst of his own suffering and imprisonment for the faith. Paul understood that even as our dignity is being stripped away in this life- whether by cancer or by persecution- that it is both momentary and preparatory. And those words are spoken in the context of the body dying and wasting away but the spirit being eternal and renewed by the Spirit of Christ.
 - i. First, he calls it a slight momentary affliction. In light of eternity, even 80 years of suffering is slight and momentary. And Paul certainly was speaking of the bigger picture. He wasn't talking about a slight momentary hangnail, but a lingering suffering that is only momentary compared to the joys of eternity with the Father.
 - ii. Second, he said that his slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure. The suffering prepares us for the eternal weight of glory. When he says eternal weight of glory, he means "unending" weight of glory. The bad and the hard might be bad and hard for a time. But what we face in the next life is a glory that is never ending. So even in considering that Norm had a long struggle with cancer, he will now have an unending reign with the Father in paradise.
3. Our Eternal Future
- a. And that is the reward for any faithful follower of Christ. At the moment that we come under his sacrifice of atonement on the cross his blood washes away all of our sins. Even as we will face struggles and hardships- and many of us suffering- we all face the same promise: that these slight momentary afflictions are preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure. Our bodies age. We grow old. We deteriorate physically- and sometimes even mentally. But for the Christian, we are being renewed day by day by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. As I said, we aren't defined by how many good stories we have about our lives, nor are we defined by the suffering and the trials. We are defined by our commitment to he who died for us in order to overcome our sin and reconcile us to the Father. This world is fleeting, momentary. But through Christ, we are granted the opportunity for an eternal weight of glory. By his sacrifice on the cross, we can have Christ stand with us moments after we leave this earth and present us to the Father as his sons and daughters, where each one of us can hear him say to us, "Well done good and faithful servant."