Suicide - A Funeral Sermon Resource

This message was preached at a funeral service following a suicide. It proved to be a powerful word of encouragement in the midst of tragic circumstances and is provided here as a sermon example and resource. It is used with permission from the officiating pastor, Rev. Park, who serves in a sister denomination. Scripture readings earlier in the service included portions of John 11, Romans 8 and Ecclesiastes 3.

To (list of first names of spouse and children/their spouses), family and all friends, God’s peace truly be with you this day.

Today we do one of the most difficult of all things to do - we gather to grieve the passing of (first name), much loved, respected, kind and caring, hard working and decent man, a wonderful person – a husband, a father, a brother, an uncle and a friend – and we gather to commend him into God's care.

Grief is never an easy burden to bear - and never more so than when it comes to us in what we can only regard as an untimely fashion. It causes to arise within us many questions - questions about ourselves and what we might or might not have done to make things different - questions about the one we loved and just what he experienced in his journey that had become so dark - and questions about God and God's goodness.

We come today, in our grief, in our pain, in our anger, in our doubt, in our confusion, but today is also an opportunity to remind us about what the Word of God says and does not say regarding a tragic death. I only have time to briefly summarize this morning what I believe God would have you remember.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that this act is unforgivable. Christians experience depression, mental illness and chemical imbalance in the brain that sometimes trigger a suicide, but God filters his grace through tragedies such as this. Even Jesus told his disciples that his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow even to the point of death.

It’s been said that when you’re right, nobody remembers; and when you’re wrong, nobody forgets. This was not the way we wanted to say goodbye to (first name). It really is a tragedy, but an even greater tragedy would be for anyone to dwell on one moment of weakness or confusion and neglect the rest of his life as a loving husband, a wonderful father, brother, uncle, teacher, mentor, co-worker, Christian, and friend.

God does not judge any of us on our final act, whether good or bad, but on the totality of our life and heart. So we should avoid asking questions that will have no answers till we get to Heaven. When our faith falters, we cry out with Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, who said to Jesus in today’s gospel reading, after Lazarus' sudden death. “Lord, if….” And there’s probably not a person here who hasn’t thought that same thing this past week: “Lord if only I had acted differently….If I could have been there…If only I would have been more observant…”

But “if” is a word that looks back on a past that cannot be changed. “If” raises a host of questions that nobody can answer right now but God. Even if we did know the answers, our
pain would not be any less nor our sorrows any lighter. "If" looks backward, but faith looks forward.

What we need today is faith to believe in God’s grace and control. Faith that Paul talks about in his letter to the Romans, that we read this morning, is still true and that in all things, even tragic things, “God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.”

This morning, while we cannot help but be troubled with the way (first name) chose to end his life, we must look beyond the end to see the real picture and legacy he left behind. As (name of person giving eulogy) beautifully said earlier, (first name) loved and enjoyed life, was committed to (spouse's name and family), encouraged hope and prosperity of life in his teaching, communes with fellow Christians as a Christ’s servant. So we can claim the same truth for (first name) that we preach and teach for all: the blood of Christ will make it possible for him to pass over from death to life.

Broken hearts are not mended with easy answers, but with truthful ones.

With the death of (first name), we are in a time of mourning. The pain is real. It cannot be denied. It cannot be minimized. It cannot be ignored. It must be lived through. It is the reality that (first name) is gone. But it is also the reality that (first name) will now live in us. There can be joy in the midst of mourning. We know that our sorrow must be tempered with faith that (first name) is in God’s everlasting care.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven in God’s time. The key to living is to realize that there is a rhythm of life; there is a time for one thing and a time for another. Though it is sad and we will miss (first name), we sense this is not the end of the story, because grieving is a matter of life more than of death.

If the seasons teach us anything, it is that death does not have the last word. Death is not the end. Beyond our veil of tears there is another life, another world. The grave is not our goal; to be with Christ is. And (first name) has achieved this goal. He is in the place prepared and promised by God through Christ.

We now go out still in deep sorrow over the loss of our friend, (first name). And yet we also go out in hope, in the hope that God’s healing will come gently into our lives. We go out in the hope that (first name) will continue to live in our lives, that time will not dim his influence, nor our memories grow faint in remembering his example of true humanity. So we go out in gratitude that we have been privileged to have our lives touched, even if for a brief moment, by (first and last name).

It is in this hope and promise that we find our greatest comfort, and perfect peace; peace in the midst of our deepest pain, peace in the midst of our grief. Jesus brings peace that is a new security, that we will be reunited with all our loved ones, to live in the glory of the new creation, where death shall be no more.

This is the promise of God. Thanks be to God. Amen.