

A Funeral Meditation
A Service of Witness to the Resurrection
John Knox Presbyterian Church - Indianapolis, Indiana
July 30, 2020

Dorothy Dedrick
July 20, 1950 – March 24, 2020

Romans 8: 31-39
John 3: 11-17

Grief; sadness; anger; confusion; loss – these are some of the many emotions which we bring with us today. Grief for a dear friend no longer being with us. Sadness that new memories will not be made for the future. Confusion at trying to grieve and seek closure in the midst of a pandemic. The loss of such an important person in all of our lives.

As human beings, we have not been created to live in isolation. God created us to be in relationship with others. We are born into families; we are educated in school with classmates and friends; we engage in work and vocation with colleagues, strangers, and our community; we may fall in love with someone who becomes our partner in this journey called life. Just as God came into this world in Jesus Christ to be in relationship with us, so too are we called to live our lives in relationship with one another.

And that is what makes death so hard. What shocks us about death is that key person, who we related to in significant and meaningful ways, is now gone. Just as our identity is formed through relationships, death alters our personal identity due to the absence of that relationship. The friend you relied on to tell you what you needed to hear will no longer share in those conversations. The parent who taught you about life through their love will no longer be present. The spouse who walked beside you through thick and thin, for better or for worse, will no longer be there for the journey. The world is not the same today as it was yesterday.

It is true, we are grieving the loss of a wonderful, caring woman who touched us all in unique ways. And yet, today is not only about our grief, our need to seek comfort from God as we mourn Dorothy's death. It is also a time for us to give thanks to God for how he has worked through one of his children to teach us the breadth and depth of his love. For in our worship of witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we affirm that God is more powerful than death, and is the giver of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul is very direct and strong-willed when it comes to eternal life. That life is ruled by Jesus Christ. There are no shootings or violent acts against innocent human beings. There are no diseases or

illnesses which cannot be cured. There is no hatred or abuse or famine. The life which Christ rules is one of peace and hope. It is a life which we have been promised in his life, death, and resurrection. It is a life which is unlike anything which we can know now, but will ultimately know if we only have an inkling of faith in him.

In his Letter to the Romans, Paul reassures us of this eternal hope by exhorting the church to believe in God's boundless love for us. No matter what we may suffer through in this world, no one can separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ. "Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (8:35,37). The trials and tribulations we may go through now are nothing in comparison to how God has loved us in his Son, Jesus Christ. That is the promise, the comfort, the assurance we have as Christians that life is indeed better because God first loved us. "(Nothing) in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39).

In the Presbyterian Church we will call a funeral "a service of witness to the resurrection." We live our lives of faith as witnesses to the one who conquered death so that we all might have eternal life. Death may alter our earthly identity, but our faith in the resurrection grounds our being in the One who created us, who redeems us, and who sustains us.

In our gathering together here today, we are bearing witness. We are bearing witness to God's grace and presence in the life of Dorothy Dedrick, one of God's children, who touched each of us and so many others in immeasurable ways. And we are also bearing witness to the fact that we trust and believe that God will be with us in all times of life: times of great joy and happiness, and times of great sadness and grief. Just as Dorothy was never alone in her walk of faith throughout her life, neither are we alone as we bear witness to the one who came "so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life."

Dorothy trusted and believed in that statement of faith which we have read from John 3, and in her daily walk of faith wanted others to come to trust and believe that God loved the world so much through the gift of his only Son. Life was not always easy for Dorothy, but she relied on her faith and her family to live out her calling as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

She shared God's love with others through the gift of hospitality, in acts of caring and through kind words. She loved her family dearly, as evidence in her devotion to her husband, Doug, for forty-nine years, and her love and care of her children, grandchildren, and family. She was always willing to help others, whether it was as a lunch volunteer in the cafeteria at her children's elementary school, providing just the right meal when her kids were not feeling well, or assisting with various

activities here at John Knox. She loved the outdoors and felt connected to God as she tended to her flower beds and yard. Dorothy was a fierce friend, as well, who was always there when you needed someone the most. We are deeply grateful for how God worked through her life to let others know how they were loved and cared for by him.

We are each given a light that shines in us. That light can either be kept to ourselves, or shared with the world. There is no doubt what Dorothy chose to do with the light that God had given to her. Now, the question becomes: what will you do with the light God has shined on you through Dorothy? My prayer is that we may find it in ourselves to share that light of love. Because you never know how your light will illumine someone else's dark path, as surely Dorothy illumined each of our paths.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Thanks be to God. Amen.