

Where do we turn when someone so beloved, so talented and giving, dies and we see him no more? We turn, as Paul did, to our family, our friends and our faith. We gather here, as family and community, to acknowledge Paul Edward Ludwig and his great gifts given to us throughout his life.

Paul experienced life at its best and life at its hardest. His wife, Mary, and his children, were the best things in his life, he told me when we visited this summer. The death of Mary in 2015 was the hardest. And in between were ups and down just like all of us experience.

These last several months as his life drew to a close Paul pondered many things, including faith. The scriptures read this morning and the hymns we sing are ones that Paul chose. They suggest that he found comfort in knowing that Jesus has gone before us to make sure that when it is our turn to die and to be reunited with God that we are welcomed and comforted in all possible ways. That death is not to be feared but to be seen as a time of transition from this physical life to life eternal with God, who loves us beyond measure.

In the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, we acknowledge this transition – from a physical plane in a human body with its ultimate demise and transition into a spiritual body. And for the Apostle Paul and each of us to achieve that spiritual body, we must first die in our human body. The Apostle Paul writes:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. ...and this mortal body must put on immortality. ..Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? ...Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Right now, in these early days of grief especially, Paul's death does sting and it sure seems that death has had a victory. This is part of what we are here today to respond to. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we too shall be raised.

As we grieve Paul's death, it is good to remember some happier times. Isabel Arvin sent this remembrance:

As you will recall, my husband, Charlie Arvin, played a lot of golf with Paul and Jack Roberts. Charlie loved telling the story of the time someone hit a tree when they were playing. Jack, who had problems seeing, said "I saw it" and Paul, who had hearing problems, said "I heard it."

Paul was someone who lived out his faith in quiet ways. He served this community in many, many ways- and I encourage you to read again the Obituary that lists some of the many ways in which he gave back of his gifts and talents.

Conley Stamper related a medical emergency situation with his wife, Linda, and how Paul's diagnosis and quick action saved Linda's sight. As Conley wrote:

During this terrible crisis for Linda and all of us who loved her, Paul was nothing less than calm, precise and caring. I never knew Paul without a smile or a willingness to selflessly care for all those around him. Heaven has surely added a grand new member.

Paul chose John 14, verses 1-6, for the Gospel reading at this service. We are reminded by Jesus that change is coming and that we “do not [need to] let [our] hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” In the dark days of grief, or of doubt and regret, we can take comfort in knowing that Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us. God’s place for Paul was marked and made known with his baptism when the priest made the sign of the cross on his forehead and said “Paul, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own for ever. Amen.” (BCP 308). God has been waiting for Paul since that moment in time and welcomed Paul into eternal life at the time of Paul’s death. We do not need to let our hearts be troubled because Paul has reached the place he was destined to be from the moment of his baptism.

In a few minutes we invite you to gather with the family in Whitlock Hall for a time of remembrances and hor d’oevres. Perhaps this is one reason Paul chose Isaiah 25 for our first reading. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that

The Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear... Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Memories and the sharing of those memories will keep Paul alive in our hearts. Sue Tothoroh remembers that:

Hanging in (Paul’s) office was a picture of a mountain that I admired. He informed me it was Mount Hood, stating, “I hope you can see it some day. Two weeks ago I saw Mt. Hood. Our conversation crossed my mind various times while there. ... The world needs more people like your parents. Blessings and prayers.

The world does need more people like Paul and Mary Ludwig. We have all been blessed to know them, whether it was a long or a short time. Paul is gone from this earth but he lives on with God and he lives on in our hearts. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for Paul who now rests in eternal life with all the saints. **Amen.**