**5/15/23**

**Peacefully**

**John 14:1-6**

Dear family members and friends of Lyle,

May God’s grace, mercy, and peace be with you all from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I want to lead things off here with a bit of a disclaimer. I want you all to know that I will do my very best to hold it together today and exhibit a sense of professionalism in the very sense of my own grief. I have come to know Lyle over the past several years whether I saw him at church, ran into him in the community, or even visited with him for home communion at the hospital, nursing home, or at his residence. With that being said, I am also very thankful and blessed to have gotten to know him, his wife, and several of his family members and friends over the years. Thanks be to God for being allowed to have him touch my life and heart a little bit, and I am forever hopeful that I was able to do the same for him.

Now, I would imagine those of you sitting in those very pews out there have experienced various feelings of shock, disbelief, frustration, confusion, guilt, anger, loneliness, and sadness over the past few days since we learned of Lyle’s passing. I am here to inform you that all those feelings, and so many more are quite normal. I am also here to remind you that those feelings are also normal to continue to have, and you do not need to push them down in any shape, way, or form. Even though we all know and recognize that our very own lives have a time frame on this ball of mud, it still does not make it any easier to confront death and the loss of a loved one. We miss that person greatly in so many ways, and that is even if it was just a simple warm and heartfelt smile or greeting. Unfortunately, that person is no longer here with us, and for lack of better words, that really stinks.

I know when I got the text from Sue telling me that she had sad news, and that her Dad headed to Heaven last Monday morning, I had to pause. I put my head down in my hands at work, I took a deep breath, and I prayed. I went on to reread her text a few times as if it were not true, as we all want to have that feeling when things are real and we just do not want them to be. The one word in her text that really did strike me and catch my attention was… peacefully. Yes, Lyle was in his own home with family, and now he went to his eternal home. Sue went on to say she would like to speak with me or someone from the church about a funeral service. She also thanked me for visiting with him. I am here again to say it was my pleasure to spend time with him, and again I thank you all for allowing me to be a little part of his life as well.

For us at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, we say good-bye to our dear friend. Whether someone from our congregation knew Lyle for a brief moment, or ever since him and his wife walked in those very church doors and joined our congregation for worship service the very first time, I want you to know that he will be missed. This congregation’s prayers and support are extended to all of you, and please know that we are here for your continued prayers and support as well.

When I sat down with the family the other day at the table at Lyle and Leone’s residence to prepare for this funeral service I was blessed to learn even more about Lyle. Now, one thing I knew before this very meeting though was that Lyle and Leone have a plate hanging in their hallway that commemorates their anniversary. Now… it does not commemorate just any anniversary… However, it calls back to June 21st, 1952… and that day last year that marked 70… yes, I said 70 years of marriage! You just simply do not hear about that these days, and what a blessing to be able to even announce and talk about that! Now, I am quite sure that those 70 plus years did not come to pass without ups and downs on the road, but Lyle and his Leone put something pretty special together in the eyes of God. They followed their vows all those years. I am ever so thankful that they set this example for my wife and I, our congregation, as well as their family and friends.

Now, I am not too sure I ever pictured Lyle as a farm boy growing up in Wisconsin. I mean I just never really thought he would be the one chasing around chickens or tending to the crops. But I also suppose his time alone on the farm may have contributed to him being so reserved and stoic. This also leads me to believe that one of his favorite lines from one of those western movies he liked to watch so much would come from John Wayne. I suppose he lived by the statement, "A big mouth don't make a big man."—The Cowboys (1972) Lyle probably also learned some pretty good principles and life lessons from his time spent in the Navy. His initials LON that donned his Navy jacket got him the nickname of Lonnie during his years of service. Those years of service and connection led to a party that would forever change his and Leone’s life on New Year’s Eve back in 1951 too. Over their friendship, that led to their marriage, I also learned that Lyle would also become a loving and demanding parent. He worked many years in the trade industry, and was a partner and owner of plumbing companies. Hearing this brought to light why Lyle kind of growled at me, or at least the topic I brought up one time in conversation, when I had issues with my water heater. I never furthered this conversation, but I am pretty sure he would have probably had a few things to say about the company providing service, or the brand or type of water heater I would eventually select and have installed. Thank goodness for his years of work in that industry, and the lifelong friendships that he made that eventually led him and Leone to move down to this area. Without this move our congregation, and myself, would have never been blessed with having Lyle in our lives.

Thank God for Lyle! Thank God for all of his life experiences, family, friendships, vocations, the love he shared, and all the time and stories he shared with us as well. However, “In the midst of your grief, as your Vicar, I know that I can’t speak words that will miraculously take away your grief and sorrow, and put your lives back the way they used to be.” (2) What I can do though is give you a little glimpse of why Lyle walked in those church doors and spent time with us on Sundays, and why he spent time on his faith journey sitting in those very pews. I can take you on the learning adventure we have in front of us today with our Gospel Reading.

If you remember the very first thing we heard in our Gospel Reading was “Do not let your hearts be troubled?” (1) In the world we live in today, and the world back then in Jesus’ time, that statement is much easier said than done for sure. Let alone back then I am sure that the disciples were full of doubt and questions, just like we are today. I am sure they voiced their opinion and concern, just like we do too. So, whether it was the disciples back then, or even us sitting in the pews right now, it is perfectly fine to question and say… “Jesus, what are you talking about? You’re being falsely accused of things, you’re being beaten, mocked, and they’re going to kill you! Not only that, but if they are doing that to you, will we be next? How can you say” (3) “Do not let your hearts be troubled?” (1) Living out their faith back then, and our faith right now, is not an easy journey at times, and it does definitely come with some risks of safety, but it also comes with great reward.

I am here to remind you that as Christians in the continued pursuit of our faith we are forever reminded that nothing begins and ends with one statement. Everything is a continued walk on our faith journey. I am quite sure Lyle sat there in one of those pews and did not get hung up on the first statement of Jesus, “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (1). I am sure he listened to what else had to be said in scripture. I am sure he heard the forever promise to “Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." (1) I am sure Lyle recognized there was something greater for you and for me despite his declining health, memory, or anything else he had going on. I am sure Lyle clung to his faith, and clung to the eternal hope for better times with God in Heaven. I am even pretty certain that he is up there right now offering up his services and mindset to fix some of the plumbing up there in all those rooms if there is an issue God needs some help with.

Now, I know for certain that “The days, weeks, and months ahead are going to be rough. I know we will have good days and bad days, and that we will miss a husband, a father, a grandfather, a great-grandfather, an uncle, a friend. However, if there’s one thing that will get us through that, is grace. Look around today, see all these faces here? We’re all here to show that love and grace that Christ first gave to us by continuing to love and support each other today and in the future.” (2) So, I encourage you to not hang your heads when you walk out those church doors. I encourage you to remember the words of our Gospel Reading, the very promise that the Lord has provided.

I also want to encourage you to have a good laugh, and a good memory of Lyle that overcomes the very grief and sorrow we are all feeling right now. As I close things out here I cannot seem to shake one story the family shared with me, that has the look on Lyle’s face forever etched in my mind. So, let me re-share that story with you all… One day while working out in the yard, or doing whatever Lyle was keeping himself busy with, he managed to stumble and fall. Unfortunately, they could not get him back up, and they had to call the ambulance. When emergency medical staff arrived they found Lyle on the grass. They had asked him what had happened, and of course he pointed up at his wife and said, “she pushed me!” Now, I can only imagine the very smirk he had to have had on his face, and the laugh he had to have had at that moment which I am sure was priceless. We are forever reminded of how stoic and reserved Lyle was most of the time, but in this very story we are also reminded of the little prankster that had to come out from time to time as well. Thank you Lord! Thank you for blessing us with Lyle your good and faithful servant!

Amen.

**References**

(1) Here We Stand: Lutheran Study Bible

New Revised Standard Version

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Augsburg Fortress: Minneapolis

(2) SermonCentral.com

Grace

Contributed by Christopher Martin on Dec 17, 2007

Scripture: John 14:1-6

Denomination: Lutheran

(3) SermonCentral.com

"Freda's Homecoming"

Contributed by Christopher Martin on Dec 17, 2007

Scripture: John 14:1-6

Denomination: Lutheran

**John 14:1-6**

1Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.