

SERVICE FOR CHARLES DAVID BIRD
OCTOBER 26, 1979

Text: Matthew 25:34-40

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'

This parable from Matthew is one of the most vivid parables which Jesus ever spoke, and the lesson of it is crystal clear. The lesson is this--that God will judge us according to our reaction to human need.

Jesus is saying that God's judgment does not depend upon the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame we have acquired, or the fortune we have gained, but it depends on the help we have given.

This parable teaches us that this help is really simple things. The things which Jesus selected were: giving a hungry person a meal, giving someone some clothes, a thirsty person a drink, welcoming a stranger, helping a person who is sick or in prison. These are things which anyone can do, but so often do not.

I believe Dave Bird's life can be briefly described in such a way, because he was such a thoughtful, kind and helpful person. Those of you who knew him best knew him to be this way. He loved you, his family and friends. He was trustworthy and you could always count on him. Many of you here today worked with Dave, and you knew you could always confide in him. He was a good counselor for anyone who needed to share a problem.

One of my most special visits with Dave occurred one day while he was in the hospital, yet on this particular day he felt quite well. He asked me in his usual gentle manner to have a seat. Then he asked me to tell him about myself, what I was doing, how things were going at the church. He cared for people and he was able to express this care in a special way. As Jesus said, "If you have done it unto one of the least of these, you have done it unto me. Enter now into the kingdom prepared for you."

When tragedy and death occur, you and I may not come up with the answer, but we can turn to our faith, our friends, and our experiences to help us in such difficult times.

The psalmist, who loved the out of doors, the beauty of nature, and mountains and hills, looked up to the hills and asked, "From whence does my help come?" And in the following sentence answers his own question with the affirmation, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" The God who created earth created us and loves us and helps us.

Our help comes from the words of Paul, who assures us that nothing in life or death can separate us from the love of Christ. And then in another letter, as he is writing about his own nearing death, he tells us not to worry about death because when we die we go to be at home with the Lord.

May our faith comfort us.

This is also a time of grief for all of us who knew and loved Dave. Grief is that very natural way for us to deal with the loss of someone special to us. And I think it is important for us to remember that Jesus wept when he experienced grief.

In this time of grief may each of you here today experience and know the comfort of Almighty God and the support from your family and friends and the care which the church has for you.

Although death and memorial services are times of grief and sadness, they can also be times of thanksgiving.

Each person here today can be thankful for the life of David Bird. Each of you can remember those times you shared with him -- those good times and those tough times -- those joyous times and those adventuresome times.

May each of you remember, recall and share those times you had with Dave which were truly unique and gifts from God.

Even in the midst of tragedy and death we can assuredly say, Thanks be to God for the life of David Bird. Thanks be to God, for His mercy endures forever!

Prayer

Eternal God, our creator and sustainer of all life, we thank you for Dave, his life, his deeds, his words, his care and concern, his Will Rogers sense of humor, his faith, his family and his friends. It is our faith that Dave is with you in peace and joy. We pray for Anne, for Chuck, for Bill, for Elaine, for these friends, for each person here today, that they may feel and know your strength and comfort for the living of these days.

In Jesus' name we pray, as he taught his disciples to pray...