

Memorial Service for Christine Peterson

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Date: 06 March 2020

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Well, good morning. We're here to honor God as we remember the life of Christine Peterson. On behalf of the family, I thank you for being here.

! As we begin our time together, let's join our hearts together in prayer and ask for God's help in what we're about to do. Pray with me. Our loving, eternal, heavenly Father, we meet this morning to remember all of your goodness.

All of your goodness. And who can count in how many ways you were so good to our sister Christine, to our dear friend and our loved one.

And as we remember her, we want to bring you honor. And we want to bring you praise and thanksgiving for all of the goodness.

All of your goodness that we see in her life. And so we would ask that this morning you would be a God of all comfort to us.

[1:14] And that you would give us wisdom and understanding and perspective as we look into the face of death.

And will you please teach us to number our days aright. For death is the end of all men and the wise take it to heart.

And above all else, help us to see the glory of Jesus Christ our Savior. The only one who can take care of our biggest problem.

Our sin. And he's the only one that can prepare us to die. To face judgment. To see and meet our God.

He's the only one that can prepare us and make our death to be a homecoming. And an entrance into glory and joy just as it has been for Christine.

[2:11] And so we pray that you would help us to do these things for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Christine Neva Peterson, 88, of Bremen, went to be with the Lord at 9 o'clock in the morning on Monday, March 2, 2020.

Christine was born on July 27, 1931, in Middleton, Ohio. The daughter of the late Russell and Bernice Moore. Christine is survived by two children, Marcy and Dr. John Larson and Mark and Londa Peterson of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Three grandchildren, John David Larson, Kevin Larson, and Katie Sheckler. And two great-grandchildren, Haley and Eowyn.

She is also survived by a brother, Lawrence and Carol Moore of Richmond, Indiana. She is preceded in death by her parents, her husband, David Peterson, and brother, Paul Moore.

Christine was a grade school teacher for many years. She and her husband were missionaries in Central America for 10 years. And after her missions, she again taught and was a full-time pastor's wife.

[3:39] After her retirement, she went to Peru as a missionary, where she again taught children. She attended Grace Fellowship Church. She loved the Lord, and she was very devoted to her church.

I first met Christine about 16 years ago in 2004 when she moved from Florida up to Bremen and began attending this church, Grace Fellowship Church.

And I've known her for only 16 years, not nearly as long as many of you. But if I had to use three words to describe Christine as I knew her, it would be joyful and peaceful and loving.

I'd ask, how are you doing, Christine? And she would always say, almost invariably, I'm blessed. I am blessed.

And she was a happy, she was a kind soul. And that's what I thought. But I didn't know everything about her, and I didn't know all of her life.

[4:54] That was just my perspective, and I thought there might be something different or something more. And so I asked Marcy, can you describe your mom? What was she like?

If you could put some words upon her, how would you describe her? And her very first word was my very first word. It was joyful. She was joyful.

She wasn't a complainer. She loved people. She loved her husband. She loved her children. She loved her grandchildren. Christine in church was what she was at home.

Joyful, loving people. Loved to sing happy songs. She didn't like songs that dragged.

And I like that about her, because I don't like them either. She was blessed, and she knew it. She knew it. Jesus was hers, and she was his.

[5:54] And every day, Jesus was a fountain of life and joy and peace welling up inside of her. And so how can you be sad? How can you complain when Jesus is yours, when you've been so loved?

She was blessed, and she knew it. And so this morning, we are going to sing together three songs. And they are three happy songs. Because if she was showing up here, she would want us to be singing happy songs. That's the way she would want it.

And so we're going to sing two here at the very beginning. And the first one is from the overhead.

We're going to sing blessed assurance. Blessed assurance. So if you can, would you stand with me and join as we sing blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

And then take your blue Trinity hymnals.

[7:07] And we're going to turn to hymn 533. 533. Why was Christine so joyful? Well, she had a friend in Jesus. And she could take all of her troubles to him.

And then they were his problem. She didn't have to worry about them anymore. So what a friend we have in Jesus. Hymn 533. We do not grieve like those who have no hope.

But we certainly do grieve. And however you look at it, we are in the shadow of death.

And it does cast a dreadful shadow. The Apostle Paul says the last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death is an enemy.

It's a conquered enemy. So we don't grieve without any sort of hope. But it is certainly a fearsome and final enemy that we all have to face.

[8:23] And so here we are in the shadow of death. And it's good that God has not left us then to wander in the darkness. Just wondering what we should do.

He's not left us without his word. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. That's when you need a light, when you're in the darkness.

And his word is a light for our path. And so listen as I read from the word of God. This is from Ecclesiastes chapter 3. There is a time for everything.

And a season for every activity under heaven. A time to be born. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.

[9:53] There was a time for everything in Christine's life. There was a time for everything in her life. But Christine liked to cross stitch, to sew.

And God himself knows how to sew things together. And he stretched out Christine and her life on his frame. On his own cross stitch frame.

And he stitched everything together. All of her times. All the times of her building. And planting. And embracing.

And living. And then dying. God stitched it all together. That whole life.

And when the Lord looked and he had done all things well. And the picture was complete. When that tapestry was finished. He cut the last string.

[10:53] And he removed her from that frame. And so now is a time to mourn. It's a time to embrace.

And it's also a time to speak. These are speaking times. And so that's what we would like to do now. Maybe you have a few words that you would like to say.

To share. Maybe you have a favorite memory. Maybe you have something you're thankful for. And if you do. We want to give you a chance now to speak.

If you want to come up here. That would be fine. If you just want to stand up. Or to speak out where you're at. If this is a little too intimidating for you. That's fine too. And if you don't have anything at all.

That's okay. So I just want to open the floor. Memories. Things that you're thankful for. Something that you would want to say. Mark.

[11:58] I'd like to share a couple things. Marcy and I went to high school. In Ridge Farm, Illinois. And one of my classmates sent this to me.

His name was Jay Hollingsworth. He and another classmate of ours. Mark Tate. Went with mom one weekend. On a lay witness mission.

To a church in Indiana. And on the way there. They stopped to get lunch at a McDonald's. And he remembers mom just stopping. And just saying a quick prayer. And thanking God.

For the food that they were about to eat. And that made a lasting impression on him. He thought. Wow. Even in the little things. We need to thank God.

And be thankful for. The little things too. And that really stuck with him. All these years. Ever since high school. And. I miss mom. I know she's in heaven now.

[12:51] And even all the way up to the end. The favorite thing to do. I think. Would be to be. Sitting in her chair. At home. Reading her Bible. I have so many memories of her.

Just sitting from the window. Looking out. Reading the Bible. And meditating. Praying. Maybe have some. Christian music CD. Playing in the background. It just.

Again. Just retaught me. To the importance of God's word. And how it brought her. Such hope. And strength. And comfort. And I wanted to share that with you. I hate getting in front of people, but I felt like I needed to share.

I had the honor and privilege of being one of Christine's caregivers for almost four years, and me who couldn't help but love her.

But I just wanted to say how important the Lord was to her, and Alzheimer's couldn't take that from her. Just a couple weeks ago, I was singing some hymns to her, and she had her eyes closed.

[14:11] She was so sleepy this last year especially, and I sang several different hymns, probably three or four, and I sang Jesus Loves Me. Her eyes flew open, and she just smiled so big.

And then another time, this was just recently, she had her eyes closed. She was sitting on the couch, and I said, Christine, do you want me to read to you? No. Christine, do you want me to read the Bible to you?

Yes. So that was something that Alzheimer's couldn't shake out of her, and she remained sweet, and that's kind of unusual for people with dementia or Alzheimer's.

It can change their personality, and it didn't change Christine's. And she was one of the most loving people I've ever met in my life.

And one time we were talking, and I told her I didn't have any grandparents left, and she said, well, I'll be your grandma since you don't have one. And I started really enjoying my morning shifts with her on Saturdays.

[15:23] And I would sometimes be there in the afternoon and sometimes in the morning because she would sit, and her neck would go to the one side or the other, and she would kind of get a kink in her neck.

We had propped her up with pillows all around to support her head. So I couldn't really sit by her any place we were in the house, except in the morning when I would get her up.

She'd sit on the edge of her bed, and I would just sit there, and I would hold her. And I just felt like God was telling me that was important to have those physical touches and to be held.

So, Marcy and Mark, I don't think your mom could have been loved anymore.

And so, Rhoda and I already miss her like crazy. But I'm just thankful that God brought her into my life, and it was a blessing to take care of her.

[16:31] And I feel honored to be one of them. Thank you. I was given a wonderful gift by Christine.

She loved me. By choice. As a daughter-in-law, she loved me. And she willingly let go of her son so that I could have him.

And that's so much like what God did in letting go of his son. She was such an example. Of how God loves us.

And she never resented it. And she never was like some mother-in-laws I've heard about can be.

She just always loved me. We spent time together. When they were still in Florida before Mark and I were married, I was able to spend some real quality time with her.

[18:05] And she was dear. And she had a wonderful sense of humor, too.

And she never lost that. You still saw sparks of it, even as she was getting worse. There were still sparks of that humor in her.

She was an amazing woman. Thank you.

Thank you. Now is a time for us to mourn. Her gain is our loss. And so we do mourn.

We don't mourn alone, though. We don't mourn alone. We are with each other. We thank God for that.

[19:08] And it's good for us to be together. But there is one right now who is with us and who knows our sorrows.

And in the middle of the shadow of death, he's able to look us straight in the face and give us hope that is solid and true.

So I want to read to you from John chapter 14, the first six verses. And this is Jesus' last night together with his disciples.

And he's already told them that he's going to leave them. He's going to leave them. And Judas has left. And John says it was night outside.

There's this darkness on the outside. And there's the darkness that's starting to creep in to this room, this sense of there is something bad that is about to happen, something terrible.

[20:14] And they're afraid. They're afraid. They're troubled. But Jesus loves them. And so this is what he says to them.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, I wouldn't have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.

You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? And Jesus answered, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the father except through me. Now those words are very precious because of where they meet us.

[21:20] Where they meet us. They meet us in the shadow of death. These words are not words for when it's sunny out and we are young and life is happy.

We're dancing when life is young and we are strong. Jesus is speaking in the shadow of death. He's facing the last enemy.

And he's facing his own death. That's where it meets us. And he tells us, and he tells them three things. The first is, he says, I know the trouble of your heart.

I know the trouble of your heart. I see your heart. I know it's a tossing sea. It's a storm.

But don't let your hearts be troubled. And isn't it good to know that Jesus knows. Jesus knows. Jesus knows how you feel.

[22:25] The sadness. The darkness. The bittersweet memories. Maybe the echoes of her kind words. And her smile.

And her hugs. And those are just bittersweet memories. So what's going on inside? It's joy. It's trouble. It's sadness.

It's all mixed together. And Jesus knows. He doesn't pretend like it's not there. He doesn't pretend like everything is okay. It's not all okay. It's real.

It's there. And he knows. And so you and we are feeling all kinds of things today. And maybe we can't explain them. Maybe there's not one single word that you could put on how you're feeling or what you are thinking.

But whatever that is, isn't it good that Jesus knows? There is comfort in just that that he knows. And then he says, secondly, he says, trust in God.

[23:27] Do not let your hearts be troubled. And instead of letting your hearts be troubled and given to that and just overturned and sorrow and trouble, he says, trust in God.

Now, it's easy in circumstances and situations like this to begin to trust in ourselves. To say, I've got what it takes. I can handle this.

I can make it through this. Or the exact opposite is, I can't do this. I can't handle this. I don't have what it takes. But either way, whether we're supremely confident or not confident at all, you notice we're trusting in me and what I have.

We're looking here. And Jesus is saying, there's no help here. There's no help with you. Don't put your trust there. Trust in God.

Because only God is trustworthy when it comes to matters of life and death. And the shadow of death. Why can't we trust ourselves?

[24:35] Why can't we trust ourselves? Because death shows us how very fragile and weak we are. We only have the breath in our nostrils.

Isaiah the prophet says, stop trusting in man. That includes you. Stop trusting in man who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?

So I breathe. How much strength do I have? Just what is in my nose? How much strength do I have?

Just what's in my nostrils? There's no hope here. But God is from everlasting to everlasting.

He is eternal. He is strong. He is loving. God is here. God is in the shadow of death. And so Jesus says, trust in God.

[25:43] Trust also in me. That's what he says next. That's third. He says, trust in me. Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. So here they are in the middle of this.

And he's calling them. He's beckoning them to believe him. Believe in him right now. At this point, it's when we start to understand why Jesus can say, don't let your hearts be troubled.

How do you look at the reality of death? The death of your friend. The death of your mother. Don't let your heart be troubled.

Because Jesus is greater than death. He's come to conquer death. Jesus says, don't let your hearts be troubled for the very same reason that when your mother so many years ago and you had hurt yourself in some way.

So don't cry. She kissed your owie. She said, don't cry because she was going to make it all better. It wasn't going to end in tears.

[27:01] This is not how this is going to end. He says, don't cry. I'm going to make it better. And so Jesus is saying to his disciples and he's saying to us, this doesn't end in sadness.

That's not where this ends. This is going to end in and they lived happily ever after. And that's what Jesus is doing here.

Jesus is saying, don't be troubled. Trust in me. I can take care of you even here. I can protect you. I can save you even here. But, you know, trust is a precious commodity.

Only fools believe everyone who says trust in me. Trust is a precious commodity. I don't go trusting anyone and everyone just because they say so.

So why should I trust in Jesus? Why did Christine trust in Jesus? And let's be clear. She trusted him.

[28:04] She trusted him. In her Bible, I looked through it. There were lots of places that were highlighted. Two struck me. Romans 3.23.

Yellow highlight. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Why was that underlined? Why was that highlighted in Christine's Bible?

Because Christine knew that in her life. She wasn't a perfect good person with everything right. She wasn't someone who just had done enough right good things and was a sweet soul enough to impress God.

And if you think that's what she was. And if you think that's what she thought of herself. You don't understand her. She underlined that because she knew she was a sinner.

She was in that passage. She had fallen short of living up to God's glory. And so she wasn't trusting in herself. She wasn't. So who was she trusting in?

[29:11] The second highlighted passage in her Bible was Romans 10.9. For if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame. She trusted in Jesus because he was God's appointed Savior.

He is God's appointed Savior. So do you remember what the angel said to Joseph when when Mary was pregnant with the baby? He said you are to give him the name Jesus.

Give this boy the name Jesus. Why? Because he is going to save his people from their sins. The name the very name Jesus means the Lord saves.

Jesus is God's appointed Savior. And that's why he says I am the way I am the truth. I am the life. No one comes to the father except through me. He's God's appointed Savior.

[30 : 15] So why can we trust in Jesus? Well, because of what God has said about him. He's he's the Savior for you. And because he's the only one that can take care of our worst problem.

Our worst problem. What is my worst problem? My worst problem is that I've disobeyed a good. God. Not once. Not twice. A lot. My worst problem is that I have a heart that as I'm born is bent going away from God.

Like a wandering sheep who won't listen to a shepherd's voice. And that was Christine's worst problem in her life. She sinned. That's not very nice to say at a funeral, but it's a true thing. And she sinned. And I sinned. And you sinned. And the wages of sin is death. Why are we here in a church building?

[31 : 26] Gathered around a casket. We all die because we all sin. And our sin makes God angry.

And it makes us unrighteous. And God is too good to have us live with him while we are unrighteous.

While we are dirty with our sin. Where we're rebellious in our sin. And that's our worst problem. And so this isn't unusual. What we are doing here this morning is not unusual.

We're all going to die. And we are all going to face God's judgment. Man is destined to die once and then the judgment.

You have two dates that are definitely, certainly on your calendar. Death and then the judgment. And without Jesus, we are not ready.

[32 : 28] Without Jesus, we are not ready. And that's our worst problem. But Jesus, and this is not bad news. Remember, this doesn't end with sadness. But Jesus is the Savior of sinners.

He came to save. He came as a baby. He lived this perfect life. The life I didn't live. The life Christine didn't live. The life you haven't lived. He came in our place.

And he lived that perfect, righteous life. And instead of having a heart that was bent toward God, he had a heart beating with love for God every morning.

He said, you wake in my ear and I say, Lord, what do you want? That was Jesus. He lived that life. And instead of living forever, because remember the wages of sin is death.

Instead of living forever, he died. Brutally. Suddenly.

[33 : 30] There was no nursing home for Jesus. There was no soft bed and peaceful sleep. No easy, gentle, peaceful passing on a late winter morning.

No, he took God's punishment. He took God's punishment for Christine. And the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.

And he received the wages for my sin. And on the cross, he paid the price for the sins of all of his people. So that when they die, they're ready.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever would believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus died to make that happen.

So Jesus knows the place of death. He knows the place of death. He knows the power of the grave. He knows it from the inside. He hasn't heard about it.

[34 : 31] He hasn't read about it. He hasn't seen it in other people's lives. He knows death from the inside because death swallowed him up. But he conquered death.

And he left death, the grave, in ruins. And so up from the grave, he arose with a mighty triumph over his foe. And that's why he says, now trust in me.

Trust in me. Now that it's dark, now that death is all around, trust in me. I am the way to the Father. I am the living one. I was once dead, but now I am alive.

So if Christine were here right now, Christine were here, I know that she would stand here and say, don't miss it. Don't miss this.

Trust in Jesus. Give him all of your fears. Give him all of your sin. Give him all of your life. Give him all of your hopes. Lean it all on him. And she would say that because now she is not living by faith.

[35 : 34] She is seen with her own eyes. Those who trust in the Lord are never put to shame. And she's saying, I trusted it all on him. And he brought me home. He didn't let me down.

He got me here. Hallelujah. I'm blessed. I am blessed. And it's not hope for this life, just for this life. It's hope for a life to come.

Jesus says, I'm going to come back and take you to be with me where I am. There's life after death. There's life like we have never seen after death. The life we live here now is a pale reflection of

what is going to be.

It's life in Jesus. Christine was confident. She was confident. And her Bible pasted to one of the front pages was the hymn and Christ alone.

And one of the verses says this. And you put something in your Bible when you say, this is me. You don't say it when you're outside of the song, but you say, this is me.

[36 : 45] This is me. I'm in that song. And this is one of those verses. No guilt in life. No fear in death. This is the power of Christ in me.

From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. Christine was confident in him. Are you? That's what she wanted.

That's what she wanted for you. The secret of the joy and the peace and the love that exuded from Christine's life. It was from her savior.

It was her savior shining through. And so, yes, we grieve today. But we don't grieve like those who have no hope. We grieve with two eyes on Jesus.

And that's what Christine would have wanted. Not two eyes on her, two eyes on her savior. And so now listen to what the savior says. This is what it says.

[37 : 44] Then I heard a voice from heaven say, right, blessed. That's our word. That was Christine's word. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.

Yes, says the spirit. They will rest from their labor for their deeds will follow them. Blessed. She was blessed in life and she is blessed now.

Now that brings us to our final hymn. When we all get to heaven. That's what we're going to sing.

And again, how do you get there? How do we get there?

Jesus says, I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. I'm the path. You find me. You get me. You make it to heaven. And so we're going to sing. But when we all get to heaven, what rejoicing there will be.

And together with Christine, we will say, I am blessed. I am blessed by God. So stand with me again. Sing from the overhead. When we all get to heaven.

[38 : 45] Well, let's pray one last time.

Oh God, our creator, our good God. Thank you for the gift of life. Thank you for the gift of Christine's life. For the many years of blessing that you gave her.

And for what a blessing she was to all of us. Blessing to her children, her husband, her grandchildren, her friends.

Thank you for her. Thank you for saving her and loving her and keeping her. And thank you for what you've done very recently of taking her home to glory and ending all of her troubles.

And giving her the desires of her heart. Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity to honor her. To think about her, to praise you for her.

[39 : 59] And I pray that you would meet us in our sorrow. Thank you that you are near and close to those who are broken hearted, to those who are bowed down.

Thank you that your father heart is filled with pity for the sufferers and those who are sorrowing.

Amen. So, Lord Jesus, please come and meet us in our grief and do us good.

Help us to go on our way, filled with thanksgiving, filled with peace and comfort, and joy in believing.

Meet us with your grace and mercy.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, this concludes our service. The family would love to greet all of you again in the foyer.

So, if you could just give us a chance for the family to get back to the back, and then you're going to be dismissed. And so, now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.

[41 : 15] Amen. Amen.