

Welcome

Good morning. On behalf of the Kreider family I'd like welcome all of you to the funeral and celebration of the life of Amy Kreider, a dear sister in Christ and beloved mother and grandmother. Thank you for joining us today to mourn and to celebrate a life well lived. May the love of God, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Devotional

I don't think I'm alone in this, but funerals are hard. Even the funeral of a Christian like Amy is hard. Because I know what Jesus told us, I know what I'm supposed to believe - I know Amy is with Jesus now and will be raised again. And the knowledge of that truth brings me comfort and joy, and I hope it does the same for you. And yet - at the same time, I'm still sad. I have missed seeing Amy since her health began to decline and I am sad that I will not see her again in this life. Many of you feel that same grief in the loss of your mother, grandmother, and friend. Though our loss is her great gain it is still a loss for us.

But even though we grieve, we do not grieve as those without hope - and yet we still grieve. My word to you this morning is that grief is appropriate and acceptable - do not feel ashamed of your grief. It's OK to be sad. It's OK to cry. What we are experiencing is not what was meant to be from the beginning and that is worth grieving over. Jesus joins us in that grief.

If you are able, please stand for a reading from the gospel of John. I'll be reading from chapter 11. Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, was sick and had died. Jesus went to Bethany, the village where Lazarus lived, and this is what happened.

John 11:17-52 NET

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already.¹⁸ (Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,¹⁹ so many of the Jewish people of the region had come to Martha and Mary to console them over the loss of their brother.)²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary was sitting in the house.²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you.”

²³ Jesus replied, “Your brother will come back to life again.”²⁴ Martha said, “I know that he will come back to life again in the resurrection at the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies,²⁶ and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She replied, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world.”

²⁸ And when she had said this, Martha went and called her sister Mary, saying privately, “The Teacher is here and is asking for you.”²⁹ So when Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still in the place where Martha had come out to meet him.)³¹ Then the people who were with Mary in the house consoling her saw her get up quickly and go out. They followed her, because they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there.

³² Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come with her weeping, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed.³⁴ He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They replied, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ Thus the people who had come to mourn said, “Look how much he loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “This is the man who caused the blind man to see!

Couldn't he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus, intensely moved again, came to the tomb. (Now it was a cave, and a stone was placed across it.)³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, replied, "Lord, by this time the body will have a bad smell, because he has been buried four days."⁴⁰ Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?"⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you that you have listened to me."⁴² I knew that you always listen to me, but I said this for the sake of the crowd standing around here, that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³ When he had said this, he shouted in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴ The one who had died came out, his feet and hands tied up with strips of cloth, and a cloth wrapped around his face. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

⁴⁵ Then many of the people, who had come with Mary and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in him.⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many miraculous signs.⁴⁸ If we allow him to go on in this way, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our sanctuary and our nation."

⁴⁹ Then one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "You know nothing at all!"⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is more to your advantage to have one man die for the people than for the whole nation to perish."⁵¹ (Now he did not say this on his own, but because he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the Jewish nation,⁵² and not for the Jewish nation only, but to gather together into one the children of God who are scattered.)

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Jesus, the Messiah, God's anointed one and His unique Son who had come into the world, the one with power to raise people from the dead, when confronted with death and its effects still wept. It was a quiet sort of grief - not like the wailing of the mourners, but it was grief just the same. So if Jesus cries at a funeral, I think He'll be OK with it if we cry some too.

But we do not lose hope. We know that Amy put her full believing loyalty in Jesus. And as He says here to Martha, Amy lives. It may be news to some of you that Amy didn't actually die. She passed into an eternal kind of life many, many years ago when she first put her trust in Jesus as the Savior and Lord of all things. When her body finally gave out on Sunday, Amy went on living the eternal life Jesus had already given her. And we know that at the last day Jesus will raise her body again in a glorified state and all of us who have put our confidence in Him will rule and reign with Him over all things forever.

I know many of you have already decided to follow and obey Jesus in His teachings and way of life. I also know that if any of you have not that Amy would want you to hear the good news. The kingdom of God is here. Sin, death, and Satan no longer have power over any who put their trust, confidence, and believing loyalty in Jesus - the one true King over all things who has all authority, power, honor, and glory. Through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension He has reconciled us to God and freely offers the forgiveness of our sins. Put your faith in Him and obey His commandments. Rethink your strategy for life and come learn from Jesus how to truly live life to the full. The Teacher is here and He is asking for you. He will give you an eternal kind of life that starts today and never ends. Repent and believe the good news.

My desire for each of us is that we will have a funeral like Amy's - one where the people we have known in our lives will grieve for us...but with hope. Hope in the assurance of our salvation and the eternal life Jesus gives to all who believe in Him. He is the resurrection and the life and all who live from His eternal life by believing in Him will never taste death.

May the peace, joy, and hope that come from Jesus be with you all. Amen.