

A Funeral Service

Prayer in the Home

Introduction

It is right that here, where - name - lived and where he/she welcomed friends and family, we should spend a while in prayer, thanking God for all that he has given us through - name - , and asking that he will be as kind to us now, as we show our love for - name - in this last tender act.

Prayer

Let us spend a moment recollecting that we are here not just as family and friends of - name -, but as the children of God.

Holy God, holy and strong, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

Lord, today we strain to see your goodness through our grief. Though tears fill our eyes, and sorrow [and anger] at what has happened mingles with our thankfulness for - name - , we ask you to raise our thoughts to those things which last, to faith, to hope and to love. While the frailty of life confronts us you are changeless, certain, always faithful to your promises. Even out of death, you brought life, even from the cross and the tomb, there came hope.

Speak to us your words of peace. By your love which knows no end, take away our shame and remorse. Give us a heart that trusts in you. And give rest for our souls. Amen.

Reading

A reading from St John.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)

Concluding Prayer

O God our Father, your beloved Son was not afraid to face the darkness of death. [or: O God our Father, your beloved Son took children into his arms and blessed them.]

Give us grace, we pray, that we may be confident that - name - is surrounded by your never failing care and love, and bring us to your heavenly kingdom, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.

At the Church or Chapel

A Call to Worship

“A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble, comes up like a flower and withers, flees like a shadow and does not last.” (Job 14:1)

But Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26)

So we may be sure, “that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (II Corinthians 5:1)

Therefore, “God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4 altd.)

or

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. (Deuteronomy 33:27 RSV)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Cast your burden on the Lord and he will sustain you. (Psalm 55:22)

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-3)

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. (I Corinthians 13:12)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (I Peter 1:3)

Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever. (Revelation 1:17b-18b)

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

[especially at the funeral of a child]

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. (Isaiah 40:11)

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. (Isaiah 49:15)

As a mother comforts her child so I will comfort you, says the Lord. (Isaiah 66:13)

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. (Psalm 103:13)

Jesus said: Whoever becomes humble like this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4)

Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. (Luke 18:16)

Hymn

[Introduction]

[We have been brought together here by - **name** - 's death. It is because we have loved him/her - and still do - that we are all here. We want to thank God for - **name** - , his precious gift to us, now taken back. We want to be together to share our grief and help support each other. We want to find God comforting us, to hear him speaking to us as we pray and as we listen.

And above all else, we want to worship God, to renew our trust in him, to touch eternity, and say what we believe - that death is not the end; that Christ has faced it and fought it and conquered it, so that - **name** - can go where he is leading us all, to be welcomed in the arms of his grace.

Jesus said: 'Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' (Matthew 11:28)]

Prayer

Lord God, our heavenly Father, as we meet together in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we know that you are present with us in all your glory. As we remember the life - **name** - has led help us in the midst of our sadness to share together in a spirit of thanksgiving for all that he/she has meant to us.

Strengthen us at this time with the power of your Holy Spirit. Through the words of our service, speak to us your Word. In our sadness, speak your word of comfort; In our loneliness, speak your word of love; In our anxiety, speak your word of peace; In the presence of death speak your word of life. And then, we pray, be with us as we leave this place and help us to be sure of your abiding presence in our hearts day by day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings

At the heart of our service today is a faith which enables us to be sure that in Jesus Christ death is not the end beyond which there is nothing ... but a new beginning, the beginning of life eternal.

We turn first to that wonderful Psalm, Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

How can we be sure of that hope of eternal life? Shortly before he died at an early age Jesus shared these words with his disciples ...

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you; for 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.

I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

(John 14:1-3,6,27)

Shortly after sharing those words with his disciples Jesus himself died, an agonising death on the cross. But on the third day he rose again from the dead. Since then those who have come to believe in him have found that they too can share in his wonderful victory over death. Paul was one of those who found that the resurrection of Christ makes all the difference.

In fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But someone will ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?' Fool!

[Remember the seeds that you sow in the ground:] What you sow does not come to life unless it dies and as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body, as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

[Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.]

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22,35-38,42-44,51-55,57-58)

May God bless to us those readings from his Word. May they speak to each of us of the faith we share, of the hope to which we look and of the abiding love of God reaching out to us even now.

Address

Opening - a grief to share

Thanksgiving - a life to remember

Good News - a faith to share

[Hymn]

Prayers

Praise

Confession

Declaration of God's Forgiving Love

Thanksgiving

- for the life that has been lived
- for the memories that can be cherished
- for the lessons we can learn
- for the love that has been shown to - name -

Intercession - for those who mourn

Petition - for all God's people

Praise - for the gospel of faith, hope and love

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Benediction

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

(Ephesians 3:20-21)

The Committal

Words of Scripture

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11:25)

John writes, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among men and women, He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

(Revelation 21:1-4)

[at a burial]

Jesus said, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)

[Prayer]

Words of Committal

[at a burial]

We have entrusted our brother/sister, - name - into the hands of God, and we now commit his/her body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, having our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father, and in the victory of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried, and rose again for us, and is alive and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

[at a cremation]

We have entrusted our brother/sister, - name - into the hands of God, and we now commit his/her body to be cremated, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, having our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father, and in the victory of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried, and rose again for us, and is alive and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.' (Revelation 14:13)

or

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)

or

For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Revelation 7:15-17)

[Hymn]

Prayer

Lord God, our Heavenly Father, send us forth from this place, looking back with thanksgiving in our hearts, looking forward in hope, sure of your abiding love in our hearts now and for evermore.

Blessing

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be amongst us and remain with us now and for evermore. Amen.

or

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20,21)