

SUNDAY

April 3, 2011

READ: Luke 7:11-13; Luke 8:49-52; John 11:17-19, 31-33

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What situation links these three passages together...what has happened? What is the natural disposition of the people in these passages at this time?

KEY CONCEPT: Death brings loss to those who remain behind. It is normal (and healthy) for people to grieve that loss.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: Have you lost a family member or close friend to death? Did you mourn their loss for a season of time? How did you process the pain of losing this person / these people? What part did the person's funeral play in your dealing with the loss and the pain you felt? Do you think that the extent of your grieving over their loss would have been different if there had not been a funeral service? In what ways?

PRAY: Funerals help to bring a sense of reality to the departure of a loved one...beginning a process of closure. If you know of someone who has recently lost a family member to death, spend some time today praying for God's comfort for them.

MONDAY

April 4, 2011

READ: John 11: 25-26; Rev. 1:18; John 14:6, 19

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In these passages heard frequently at funeral services, what is being offered to those who grieve? What other passages of Scripture come to mind that you have heard at funerals?

KEY CONCEPT: While grief is real, we can take hope in the fact that Jesus has conquered death.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What is distinctive at a Christian funeral service that you will not experience at a service that is not based on the promises of Christ? What difference does it make if the person who passed away was a believer in Jesus Christ? How has the faith of a loved one whom you've lost to death made a difference in how you grieved that loss? Has the passing of a family member or a good friend caused you to re-evaluate your own mortality and the difference (hope) that Jesus Christ offers?

PRAY: The hope of heaven as the destination for a departed loved one can bring immense help to those left behind. Pray for God to bring that assurance to those who are currently grieving a loss, that they may be comforted.

TUESDAY

April 5, 2011

READ: Luke 7:11-13; Luke 8:49-52; John 11:17-19, 31-33

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: In each of these passages, we see people gathered with the grieving person. Why do people gather around those who have experienced a loss? What does 2 Corinthians 1:3-5 tell us about this?

KEY CONCEPT: God has created us to be in relationship with others. We celebrate good times together, and we comfort one another in times of heartbreak and loss.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: How have you experienced comfort from others at a time when you have lost someone you love? When you have gone to visit another who is grieving, has it always been necessary to talk to let them know that you are feeling their pain and deeply care for them? What other ways can communicate our understanding?

PRAY: Romans 12:15 tells us that we are to mourn with those who mourn. This comes in the chapter that starts out with "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship." (Romans 12:1). Taking time to be present with those who are experiencing grief is a sacrificial act of love for them, and a way to worship God with our lives. If you are planning to attend a viewing, a funeral service, or stopping by the home of one who has lost a loved one recently, pray that God will give you the words to say (or to restrain from saying) so that He is able to comfort them through you. Experience the "ministry of presence" for another who is hurting.

WEDNESDAY

April 6, 2011

READ: Psalm 23; Psalm 30:5b; Psalm 55:22; Isaiah 25:8; Matthew 5:4; John 14:1-4

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: Consider these passages from the perspective of one who is grieving a death. How do they allow God to speak into the situation that the person is dealing with?

KEY CONCEPT: God's Word gives comfort and hope to those who are grieving a loved one's death.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: When have you experienced God's love for you by reading a Bible verse or passage that has given you a word of encouragement right when you have needed it? Have you heard others say how God has spoken to them through His Scriptures? Read Hebrews 4:12. Do you think that what is said there (about the Bible being living and active) applies to situations like these, where God is able to apply His word in practical ways for the purpose of comforting those who are in grief?

PRAY: Consider how God may be able to use you to bring a word of comfort to those who are grieving a loss. The pastor will share a variety of Scripture passages at a funeral service to do this very thing. You may be able to continue this blessing by sending a note of condolence to a friend that includes a passage which God has used to bring you comfort and peace in the past. Before you lift your pen, pray for God's guidance in this, that it will be the Holy Spirit directing you in sending along this gift of His Word.

THURSDAY

April 7, 2011

READ: Philippians 1:3; Luke 22:19

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What is the concept that is common to these two verses? What application does it have within a funeral or grieving experience?

KEY CONCEPT: The act of remembrance is biblically affirmed as something of importance. It has application in God's work to bring comfort to those who are grieving.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: In a funeral service, it is quite common to have a time for sharing memories of the departed. What is the purpose of this? What kinds of things are normally shared during this part of the service? Have you lost a family member or good friend and have heard people give public remembrances of their life? How did that help you?

PRAY: Just as Jesus told us to remember Him, it is good to keep our departed loved ones in our memories. God is able to use the good things about their lives to help us gain a sense of who we are in connection to them, and to comfort us through those memories. Take time today to thank God for loved ones who have died, and to bring to your mind memories of them that will encourage you in facing the challenges of your life. Taking a lesson from the life of another and applying it in your own life is a wonderful testimony to them.

FRIDAY

April 8, 2011

READ: Psalm 46:10a; John 14:25-27

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: From Psalm 46, what does God want us to do so that we can experience Him more clearly? From John 14, what did Jesus give the disciples to help them deal with the fact that He was soon to die? What help do you think that was to them? How do we apply that gift in our own lives when experiencing the death of a loved one?

KEY CONCEPT: God promises to be with us as we continue life after the loss of someone very close to us. We need to remain closely connected to Him in prayer and in His Word.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: After the funeral is over and people have all gone about their lives, in what ways is God able to help those who are still grieving their loss? How does our relationship with God get practical in terms of putting one foot ahead of the other and moving back into life in the weeks following the death? If you know someone who has lost a loved one, how can you be a part of God's promise to comfort them well after the funeral has taken place?

PRAY: If you are in a time of grief, know that people may expect you to be over your loss more quickly than is realistic. This can be frustrating if they cannot understand the timeline of grief. When this happens, know that God fully understands your grief, and is sorrowing with you. Ask Him to help you balance the need for getting back into life with the reality of the pain you still carry. If you are a friend of one who is a grieving a loss, know that they may need a friend to talk to and process their loss well after the funeral. Be an agent of God's grace and minister His love by "being there" for that person during their times of need.

SATURDAY

April 9, 2011

READ: 1 Peter 3:15

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS: What does the instruction of this verse have to do with a funeral service?

KEY CONCEPT: Consider how your faith in Christ might be used at your funeral to bring a word of comfort and encouragement to those loved ones who remain behind.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER: What difference does it make to loved ones to know that the deceased knew Jesus as their Lord and Savior? Could you prepare for your own funeral by writing a testimony to be read at the service? What impact do you think that might have on those who are attending the service who haven't committed their lives to Christ?

PRAY: If the Great Commission of Jesus is to "go into all the world and make disciples...", consider the idea of using your funeral service to lay out the gospel message with a personal word about how you are placing your trust in its truth. This can assure those present that they need not wonder where you are. You can also tell people that they can celebrate your arrival in heaven with joyful hearts. If you would like to do this, pray for God's help in writing this message of assurance and encouragement. Pray also that He would use it to plant seeds in the hearts of those who don't yet know Jesus.



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