

DON CHADDERDON FUNERAL

Died — Thursday, July 17, 2008, at his home in rural Le Center, MN
Funeral — Monday, July 21, 10:30 AM, Church of Christ, Cleveland, MN

Message

By David Kester (October 1, 1957- July 22, 2008)
Minister, Church of Christ, Cleveland, MN, USA (1987-2008)

Ecclesiastes 3:1-7

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: 2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, 3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, 6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, 7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak....

There is a time for everything. That reminds us as the apostle Paul said in Ephesians 5:16 to, "Make the most of every opportunity..."

Perhaps you noticed the inscription on the stone at the funeral home. It said something like this: "No time to say farewell, no time to say good-bye, no time to say I love you." Who would have ever guessed that when I saw Don in church a couple weeks ago, it would be the last time I saw him. Who would have thought that when Orbbe, Joyce, Glen, and Barry played bingo with Don Wednesday and had supper with him, it would be the last time they ate with him. When Nan said, "Good night," to Don on Wednesday evening, who could have known it would be the last time she'd say those words. Death came so suddenly. There was no time to prepare, no time to say good-bye, no time to say I love you. Sometimes we think, if I had only known, "I would have called...I would have gotten over to see him," but we never know. None of us knows how many days we have. Death reminds us not to waste the opportunities we have.

So, don't wait until tomorrow to say, "I love you." Don't put off forgiving an old friend or offering an apology to someone you wronged. You do not want your life to end without those things being taken care of. Take time to call a friend, to stop for a cup of coffee, to make sure your husband or wife knows that you love him or her, for the days of this life are like dew on the grass. When this life draws to a close, few of us are going to think, "I wish I would have worked more days," but we might think, "I wish I had spent more time with my kids," or "I wish I had said, 'I love you' a few more times." This life is brief and every day is precious. Don't waste even one of them. Use each day to its fullest.

Especially, make sure you don't wait too long to prepare for death. We don't know when it will come, but the writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that just as there is a time to be born, there is also a time to die. Unless Jesus comes first, we will all face death. You might have 30 years, but you may only have a month, maybe just today. We don't know. Death doesn't warn us. It comes unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. So, make the most of each day. Live each day to the fullest so that when the end comes you will have no regrets, no unfinished business. Take care of the important things. We can get so wrapped up in the urgent things of life that we forget to take care of the important things. Take care of your important business.

As the apostle, Paul neared the end of his life he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." He had done everything he had to do. He had no outstanding business to take care of. He had lived his life in such a way that death had no fear for him. In fact, he said, "To live is Christ; to die is gain." This life is good but the life to come is more glorious still. We don't have to be afraid of death – even though we are sometimes.

Our fears fall into two general categories. We fear things we do not know about. That is why some of us are afraid of the dark. We don't know what might be lurking there and that uncertainty scares us. That is why it is frightening for kids to leave home for the first time. We don't know what it will be like to be on our own until we've tried it. That is why some of us dread the future. We don't know what the future is going to bring – that scares us. I imagine some of you are facing that fear right now. What is life going to be like without Don? What will the holidays be like? It will be different without grandpa at your games. There will be no more fishing trips. You will miss him at the reunion that is coming. The house will seem quiet and empty. How will we face the future? We don't know the answer to those questions and it is a little frightening.

I think that is one of the reasons we fear death. We haven't experienced death first hand. We aren't sure what lies on the other side of the grave and that uncertainty frightens us. But we don't have to be uncertain because our Lord Jesus faced death and then returned to tell us what was on the other side. Jesus allowed men to nail Him to a cross. He died was buried and then on the third day He rose again. That is the message of gospel. It is our greatest hope. Jesus died but He rose again. For the first time we had someone who could tell us what was on the other side of the grave; someone who had been there and come back. Death had always been a mystery but Jesus swept the mystery away.

I can't tell you every detail of what comes after death. I do know that the one who faced and conquered death has promised to prepare a place where we can dwell with Him for all eternity. Just yesterday, someone reminded me the time we spend with our Lord and our loved ones will be infinitely longer on the other side of death than they are on this side. We will have eternity with our Lord. There will be a place for us. God's word promises that not even death could separate us from His love.

God promised to be with us to the very end of the age. We don't have to face death alone. He will go with us. When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He will walk with us. He promised that death and mourning would be gone – that God Himself would dry the tears from our eyes. There will be no more days like today. He said that we would have new bodies that would never wear out. We don't have to be afraid of what lies on the other side of the grave. Jesus has taken away death's mystery and given us hope of a glorious future. 1 Corinthians 15 says Jesus is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first of a great multitude that will be raised to life. The resurrection of Jesus gives us hope we would not have otherwise.

Another reason we are sometimes afraid is that we know what is ahead and we know that we are not ready for it. It is frightening to be unprepared. Facing death unprepared is frightening too. The good news is that we can be ready to face death. The same Jesus, who conquered death and swept away its mystery, will prepare us for eternal life in His presence. The Bible says, "He who has the Son has life." We do not get ready for death by being good or nice. No one is good enough to earn his or her way into heaven. Salvation comes as a gift from God. If we trust in Jesus, He will save us and give us life. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Life comes from Jesus. If we have given our lives to Him, if Jesus reigns in us, we don't have to be afraid of death. For those who know Jesus have already begun a life with Him that will last for all eternity.

I am not saying that death does not hurt us. Death separates us from people we love and that is painful. We will miss Don. It isn't easy to say goodbye. Death breaks relationships we hold dear. It is with good reason that the Bible calls death the final enemy. It is an enemy that can wound us deeply. The good news is that even in our darkest hour, when death's power seems most devastating, death does not have the final word. The resurrection of Jesus provides us with the sure, unshakable hope that all who love Jesus will someday be raised to live with Him. You can know that hope too.

We don't have to be afraid of death. Jesus has broken its power. Four and a half years ago, my dad was very sick, dying. My niece Libby, who was just seven, was trying to comfort us. She said, "It is going to be okay. If grandpa gets better, he can come home, and that will be good. If he dies, he will go and be with Jesus, and that would be good too. Either way, we can go and see him." Libby knew that we didn't have to be afraid of death. We don't (have to be afraid of death), not if we know Jesus. Take advantage of the joy of knowing Him. He will never leave you. He will not fail you and nothing can separate you from the love of God, not even death. If you know Him, you have nothing to fear.

We will close the service with one of Don's favorite songs, *I'll Fly Away*. The first line says, "Some glad morning, when this life is o'er, I'll fly." Thursday was a sad hard day for us – but it was a day of rejoicing for Don. He has gone home.