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Date: 20 November 2019

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of Christ, from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank you. Thank you. Please do be seated. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[1:49] Thank you. Good morning.

Welcome to Whitby Evangelical Church. My name is Peter Robinson and I'm the minister here. On behalf of the family of Helen Bedford, can I thank you for taking the time to be here today.

We're met here to say goodbye to Helen, to give thanks for her life, and to commit her and ourselves to God.

It's in times like this particularly that we need the help of God, and it's to him that we're going to turn now in prayer. Let us pray.

Most faithful and gracious God, we come to you this morning as those who are faced with the sorrow and the sadness and the reality of death.

[3:06] Oh Lord, we thank you that you are the God who gives all things and all people life. You're the God who created this world. You're the God who made men and women in your own image, that we might know you and enjoy you.

We thank you that you are the God who continues to provide for the needs of all your creation.

You're the God who makes the sun to rise and set each day.

You're the God who makes the rain to fall, the crops to grow. You're the God over all things, and you provide. You give. You are a generous God.

But Lord, as we face the presence of death in the midst of life, we know, oh Lord, that we are facing a mystery. We're facing something which scares us.

We're facing something which robs us. Robs us of those that we love. Robs us of their presence.

Robs us of our peace.

[4:15] Robs us of our peace.

Robs us of our peace. Robs us of our peace. Robs us of our peace. Oh Lord, we pray that even this morning, in this time together, each of us may know the nearness of God, that we might know again the goodness of his love.

We ask these things as we ask your help in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please, would you take up your order of service.

The very first hymn is a hymn that's been chosen by David Bedford, one of Helen's sons, who sadly cannot be with us today. We're going to stand and sing, when I survey the wondrous cross.

O Lord, we pray the wondrous cross.

[5:53] On which the prince of glory died. My riches came, I count but lost.

And for content on all my pride. For me, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God.

All that they fix, that child we lost. I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, God, his head, his hands, his feet. Sorrow and love will mingle down.

It is such love and sorrow. Jesus. Amen. This Zeitgeist will proses.

[7:28] Note to God's ease for thoughts composed so rich a crown. For thoughts compose, so rich a crown. But ■i nudes diagonws had ever had ever had a world. His dying prison, dying a rope,

spreads on his morning on the tree.

Then am I dead to overblown, and overblown his dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature high, that were the present largest form.

Blood so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my own.

Let's sit down. Following the service here this morning, the family will be going up to Alarpul Cemetery for the burial.

[9:13] But if you are staying here, then there is tea and coffee. Please feel free to avail yourself of that downstairs. There's a book of remembrance at the very back of the church.

Please take time to write in that if you can. And also there will be a plate there for any donations that you may want to give in memory of Helen, and they will go to the Alzheimer's Society.

I'm very thankful that Ian, one of Helen's sons, and then James, one of her grandsons, are going to come and share some memories. James will be sharing some of his dad's memories, David.

And Ian will first come and share his own memories, and then later that of one of the other daughters. Thank you, Ian. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Please bear with me, because this is not easy.

First of all, I think, not in keeping with protocol, I would like to make some acknowledgments. I would like to, on behalf of the family, I'd like to thank the Minister, Peter Robinson, for conducting the service today.

[10:30] We're grateful for being up the service here in the Evangelical Church. I'd also like to thank Kath Davis, the organist, for providing the music during the service, and to Martin Ashburner, who very kindly took a day off work to compile and present the photos of Mum.

I would also like to thank Sue and John for sorting the photos and dealing with all the admin for her mum's death, and also to the staff of the three care homes, Peregrine House, River Mead, and Auckland's, for taking care of Mum during her final years.

I would like to thank Lisa for sorting out the flowers. It's very good of her, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my sister, Jane, for ensuring that Mum received the care and support she deserved from North Yorkshire Healthcare Authority, and also thank all of my sisters for ensuring that she was cared for and comfortable during her stay in the homes.

And finally, I'd like to thank my brother, Graham, for complying with the music to be heard at the windmill. Our mother, Helen Bedford.

Helen was born on the 17th of September, 1933. She was the youngest daughter to Ethel May and Charlie Emery, and had an older sister called Joyce, who sadly passed away a few years ago.

[11:45] She grew up in Stubbington, and like all children at that time, she had to live through the horrors of World War II. It started when she was five, and ended when she was ten.

During the war years, she was an evacuee and sent to Windlesham near Guildford, joining a school with 200 pupils in her class. They were all taught together, and we'd spend the day sat cross-legged on the floor.

When she left the school, she took on several jobs. She worked in a cafe in Leon, Solent, later in a shoe shop, and in the dining room of a local cinema as part of the catering staff.

But one of the most important jobs she took on was as a barmaid in the naffy of one of the Naval Shore establishments, as that is where she met our father, Eddie. Dad describes meeting Mum for the first time as love at first sight.

There was something special about her. The relationship blossomed, and he would often miss the last bus home for the barracks for just one last kiss. They were eventually married, but sadly the event was not attended by Mum's parents, and so Dad did not invite his.

[12:50] And she eventually became a mother of six, grandmother to thirteen, and a great-grandmother to nine. Coral, my eldest sister, was born in Bournemouth in 1953, and in 1956, while Mum was pregnant with me, Dad was drafted to a vessel, taking him out to a post in Malta.

On the night of his departure, she went into labour, but Mum chose not to tell Dad, fearing this would get him into trouble if he missed his ship. Mum followed Dad out to Malta the following February, and that cannot have been an easy trip for a young Mum, with two children travelling aboard alone for the first time, and taking with her all the family possessions.

Dad had arranged accommodation for our arrival, but it was deemed not suitable by Mum, and had a paraffin stove, a gas fridge, and was not in a very good area. In fact, the stove almost proved fatal for Mum, as she set herself on fire when refilling it, and lost most of her hair as a result.

Now sporting a very short hairstyle, and I think there is a photo of her with her hair like that, and being the determined person that she was, she quickly found better accommodation, and we lived out there for two years, during which time my sister Susan was born.

They later returned to England, and when Dad left the Navy, we moved back north to Redcar, where there was better employment. Eventually, we settled down in our home at 1 Walnut Grove Redcar. David, Graham and Jane were also born in Redcar, and one of my memories of that time were of Mum always being pregnant, and whenever she went anywhere, she was surrounded by children.

[14 : 22] She had one in the pram, one on top, and the four of us hanging on the sides. Around 1980, Mum and Dad bought a pub in Whitby. I remember them striving to get the pub ready, and I'm sure Mum's skills from her time in the naffy worked well.

However, they opened on a bank holiday, a rookie mistake, and they ran out of alcohol by the Monday. That weekend, Dad recalls that Mum was frantically searching the fridges for a bottle. Dad asked her what she was looking for, and she stated, a customer had asked for a bottle of beer called Yan. Being new to Whitby, Mum had not realised that the expression Yan meant another, so the customer was asking for another bottle.

They soon settled down to life as licensees, and Mum eventually took over the run in the pub while Dad went off to drive HGVs. Mum made a great success of running the pub and was determined to gain her own independence, pass her driving test, and own her own car.

She achieved all this and more. By the time they'd sold the pub, she'd passed the test, she had her own car, and she then secured a job as a kitchen assistant at a private school. This vacancy came about due to the head cook at the school having forced the previous seven applicants out of the post.

[15 : 33] However, when Mum took over, the chef was forced out of the post, having clearly met her match with Mum. Eventually, Mum retired and was then struck down by this awful disease of Alzheimer's and dementia.

We technically lost Mum about eight or nine years ago, and we are grateful for the care she received in the homes. I know this has been a difficult period for all the family. For years, Mum was there for us, and then at a time when she needed help, we were helpless.

I would have loved to have found a miracle cure, but it was not to be. My brothers and sisters have got some memories that they'd like to share, and unfortunately, as the Minister said, David is currently working abroad and cannot make it back for the funeral.

Therefore, I would ask his son, James, if he could come forward and read David's memories for Mum. Yeah, hi there.

Yeah, my dad's devastated he couldn't make it today, but he sent me an email with all loads of memories on it, so I'll try to do the best I can. I won't read it exactly like he will, because I've only got to church for so long.

[16 : 45] But here goes. Yeah, so memories would start from kneeling beside us at bedtime and teaching us how to pray, walking with me on my first day at school, watching her chase after me as I rode away on my tricycle, watching her make cakes and allowing me to scrape the bowl, picnics together on Redka Beach, giving me a stone hot water bottle on a cold winter's night, running with me and holding the seat as I learnt how to ride my bike, the bars of soap being pushed into my mouth after swearing, having my hair washed on a Sunday night with Vosene, thick porridge on a winter morning, watching her work so hard in preparing meals, fixing clothes, decorating and gardening, filling the gaps in the floorboards to stop the cold drafts, lifting heavy barrels in the cellar, hand-feeding Ben, the German shepherd, with so much cooked mince that I became the size of a bear, making piles of sandwiches for a darts night, telling me nicely that my prize flower in my first garden, which I had surrounded with slug pellets, was a weed, bringing me plated meals, complete with gravy, when I was alone in my first house, to always being there when I had a fall, whether it be as a child or as an adult.

So thank you mum for all your tender love and care, with love from Dave. I would now like to read my sister's memories of those times.

Sue's memories. Thank you for being a wonderful mum, for the love and care you gave to us each throughout our lives, for teaching me how to pray and to always believe and trust in Jesus. Although growing up money was very tight, I remember your imagination, inventing games to keep us all occupied on a cold and wintry day.

You'd get the fire blazing in them builders' dens, sometimes with blankets over the clothes horse, other times using table and chairs, all covered over or pulling out washing machines to make a cosy den behind. In the summer you divided up small garden plots for us to experiment with growing different fruit and veg and from which many delicious strawberries were grown.

The lovely memories of rushing home from school, all starving to arrive into the warm kitchen and the delicious aroma of home cooking. Trays of freshly baked fruit cakes, pasties and sausage rolls were a delicious welcome sight, with many cakes disappearing very quickly.

[19:05] I remember you shocking us all one cold wintry day and you decided to ride my older sister's bike to the shops. We'd never seen you ride a bike before, therefore convinced you'd never make it to the top of the road without falling off.

We all gathered at the window to watch and to our relief, you could ride quite easily and made it round the corner and returned safely with the shopping. I remember that incident and I was very disappointed that she didn't fall off.

Many happy memories of you teaching me how to bake, knit and sew, making the soft toys for my younger siblings, using materials from old clothes, amazing that from these clothes and all without a pattern, lovely soft toys were created, which were always much loved and appreciated.

For supporting me throughout the birth of my youngest daughter, Lisa, and being a lovely grandmother to both my daughters, Jenny and Lisa, when they stayed over with you, they thoroughly enjoyed being spoiled with tea by the fire and biscuits wrapped up for them to eat on the way to school.

Needless to say, that didn't happen when they came back home. You showed amazing determination throughout all the extremely busy years of bringing up six children, then to run your own busy pub with Dad for 18 years.

[20:16] Some of that time, running the pub on your own while Dad was away, long distance lorry driving. I have many more precious memories which will always be with me and you will always continue to be in my heart.

Much love to you always. Coral's memories. Sorry, I apologise. Jane's memories. Mum was a very special mum, always there for us, no matter what, never judged us or our partners.

She was very strong and although petite, would take no nonsense off anyone. She worked very hard bringing up six children, or seven if you include Dad. She was the only one that could find a parking space next to the corp when the car park looked full.

Beautiful and amazing, always looked immaculate. She was thrown in at the deep end with the pub and understanding the Whitby lingo. She even had to deal with rats in the cellar coming towards her drunk from the barrels.

She dealt with drunken people at the pub, listened to endless problems over the bar. She looked after and overfed the two dogs, Ben and Paddy. When she went on a diet, she would have salad with her fish and chips.

[21:23] She had her own toolkit, which Dad brought her one Christmas, and she was very good at everything, including DIY. Every time I was worried about Mum, she would say, don't worry about me, I'm as tough as old boots, and she certainly was.

Coral's memories. My mum was a patient teacher and taught me to tell the time, the value of money, to bake and cook, and plus so much more. Mum always made us feel special and just wanted us to be happy whatever we chose to do.

Mum was always supportive and had a smile and hug, and when things went wrong, was always there if we needed help. Mum loved her family gatherings and liked to make Christmas and birthdays special occasions.

Mum and I enjoyed many walks and picnics, chatting and laughing about this and that. We chatted about gardening or decorating projects, which she helped with on several occasions. Most of all, I remember Mum, who gave her time to make all things special as she was so busy, so freely. Mum was a true mother, who gave her love, care and support unconditionally, and I miss her so much. Myself and Graeme.

[22:27] My brother Graeme and I share many of those memories. We also recall that although she was small, you never won an argument with her. She was a disciplinarian. She rams a soap into our mouths for swearing.

She would make us walk the walk of shame to our bedrooms for bad behaviour, but we also recall that she was always there for us in our times of need. She was our guide and our mentor. Two lasting memories that I have.

Firstly, the day I joined the Royal Navy. The whole family walked me to the station on the morning to wave me off. I'm sure that was to see the back of me. But as the train pulled out, all I saw was Mum crying her eyes out on the platform.

I felt as if I had betrayed her by leaving home that day. And my second memory revolves around the burning question as to who was her favourite. I remember we were all sat round the breakfast room table when the question was being asked and being a typical mum, she would reply that she loved us all equally.

However, our secret believed I was the favourite and I based this on the following points. I was our eldest son, we were born in the same house, we shared the same birth date of the 17th of the month and, as a child, I believed I was an absolute angel.

[23 : 35] I held on to this belief despite the fact that every time I called round to see her she would call me Graham. However, this belief was eventually shattered one Sunday afternoon.

I had been sailing off Whitby and prior to returning home, I would call round to see Mum and Dad on the way just to check they were OK. I entered the pub via the kitchen and having run the gauntlet of Ben the Alsatian dog trying to kill me, I found Mum in her usual spot in the kitchen preparing two cups of tea and sandwiches.

Assuming one was mine, I thanked her and went to reach for them only to be stopped in my tracks when she said, leave them, they're his. I turned expecting to see Graham or David stood there but was stunned to see Ben the dog waiting expectantly.

I laughed thinking she was joking but could see she was serious. She then placed the sandwiches on the floor, poured the dog a cup of tea in the saucer and then picked up her own and walked from the room saying as she went, if you want something, make it yourself.

I was devastated I'd been replaced in her life by a dog. Mum had a great sense of humour, a positive outlook on life and she would not want us to be sad to celebrate our life and I believe the following poem chosen by Coral is a fitting way to end.

[24 : 55] Coral's poem, you can shed tears that she has gone or you can smile because she has lived. You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back or you can open your eyes and see that all she has left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see her or you can be full of the love that you shared. You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember only that she is gone or you can cherish her memory and let it live on. You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back or you can do what she would want.

Smile, open your eyes, love and go on. You'll always be in our hearts, Mum.

God bless. Thank you, Ian and thank you, James.

[25 : 58] That was remarkable how you kept yourself together. Well done and very, very precious memories that you shared on behalf of your brothers and sisters and yourself there.

We're going to pray once more together now, so let us pray. We bless you and thank you, oh Lord, our God, for the way that you bring people into our lives that are so special to us that when they are gone we feel ourselves empty and a vacuum where they once were.

We know, Lord, that Helen was unwell for so many years. We thank you, oh Lord, for the memories that Ian and James have shared that are so very precious to Helen's children and grandchildren great-grandchildren and friends and partners.

We thank you, oh Lord, that her life enriched theirs and we thank you, oh Lord, that this is, again, part of the way in which you care for us, you give us loving people to love and to be loved by because you are a loving God and all your gifts are good and so we give you thanks for Helen's life. We do pray that you would be with each of us here who feel her loss particularly and we thank you that we have this opportunity to be able to say goodbye and yet also to be able to carry on with all that she taught and influenced us with to pray that you would help each one who is sorrowful today that you would be near to them that you would comfort them that you, oh Lord, would help them in the days to come and the months to come and the years to come we give you thanks, oh Lord, for those very precious memories that we have again.

[28:25] Lord, they're your gift to us and Lord, we thank you again that you are such a good, faithful, careful God.

Continue with us now, Lord, and speak to us, we pray, even in the midst of this time for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. David, as many of you will know, is a Christian and he asked that during the service I could read part of the Gospel of John and make just a few comments about it which I hope will be pertinent for us at this time.

and it's John's Gospel and it's chapter 14 if you've got a Bible at home, perhaps you might like to find it later on and read it for yourself. It's where Jesus is speaking to his very closest and dearest friends, the disciples, and he speaks to them these words.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. My father's house has many rooms.

If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

[30:02] You know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him, Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way?

Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.

Death is a gate crusher into our lives. Death is a shadow that is cast over us.

Death upsets our daily routine as we live out our lives. It brings us face to face with our deepest fears because death forces us to ask questions.

To ask questions about what we believe. To ask questions about ourselves. What will happen to me when I die?

[31:13] We know that we are mortal. We know that we must all die. But naturally, we'd rather not think about it.

We'd rather put it out of our minds and get on with living. But whenever we are brought together at a funeral, then we are brought to that place of thinking about our own death.

asking ourselves, am I prepared to die? The words that David asked me to read from John chapter 14, the words of Jesus were spoken less than 24 hours before the very death of Jesus himself.

He knew it. His disciples knew it. He was ready to die. But his disciples were not ready for his death. And his words to them are as relevant to us today as they ever have been.

For they answer those very real, difficult questions about our readiness for death. Jesus gives us answers to questions which have perturbed us and all people through every generation.

[32:32] Is there life after death? The answer to that question is plain and clear from Jesus. Yes, there is. Yes, there is.

He says, I'm going to a place and I'm coming back. It's clear that after his death there's going to be a continuation of his life. So too with us.

Death is not the end. We will exist after this body perishes and dies. We are more than flesh and blood.

The very memories that have been shared, the very reality of a person's life is much more than simply a physical body. And Jesus talks about this life after death as being his father's house.

Elsewhere, he speaks of it as heaven or as paradise. It's somewhere real. Not a myth or a fairy tale or a story. There is life after death.

[33:38] And if there's heaven, the question surely that all of us must be asking and have asked, I'm sure, consciously or subconsciously, is this, how can I get to heaven? How can I be there?

And all sorts of answers are given out, aren't they? Be a good person and you'll go to heaven. Go to church and you'll go to heaven. Give to charity and you'll go to heaven.

But none of these things, nor anything else that we do or can ever do, will secure us a place in heaven.

That's why Jesus tells his disciples, I'm going to prepare a place for you. It's what Jesus does and can do and has done that can give us confidence and give us a place in heaven.

He makes it crystal clear when Thomas asks the question that all the other disciples were thinking. How, where are you going? How can we get there? Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life.

It's about what he has done. The whole purpose of his life, his birth that we'll be celebrating in a month or so's time was that he might come into this world to secure life after death for men and women with him in heaven.

The reality is each one of us has not done enough. We've sinned, the Bible calls it. We've lived our lives selfishly, thoughtlessly, no matter who we are.

[35:53] Not because God has changed or moved but because we've turned our backs on him. But Jesus came from heaven into this world to rescue us from that separation, to rescue us from ourselves.

Jesus rose from the dead Easter Sunday morning. It's proof of who he really is that he is God that he is God the son. It's evidence that he can be believed and trusted so that when he says believe in God believe also in me we have good reason to believe in him.

[37:09] and the final question surely must be this will I be in heaven one day when I die? Will I be in the presence of God?

Helen's favorite pieces of music and it's a wonderful hymn known by Christians and non-Christians alike but it talks so much about the faith and the hope that is for the Christian of life beyond death so let's stand and sing Amazing Grace Amazing Grace Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I was lost but now I'm found was mine but now I see was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved how precious did that grace appear the hour the hour I first believed through many dangers toils and snares I have already come come this grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home the Lord has promised good to me has promised good to me his word my hope secures he will my shield and portion me as long as life endures has life endures his way is fresh that heart shall fail that mortal life shall cease

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