

## “J.O.Y.” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Bob Rekdahl Memorial – July 20, 2024

- I. **Debbie and all the family** and friends here today: grace, peace, and mercy are yours through our living Savior, Jesus Christ.
- II. **I tell people as a pastor** I walk with you through the ups and downs of life.
  - a. Today, and the past several weeks have been one of those downs.
  - b. Bob has always been there for many of you, and that’s why it feels like an important piece of your lives is missing now.
  - c. I suppose we were getting ready for a different kind of loss when Bob was diagnosed with cancer, but then to have him taken suddenly by Covid caught us off guard.
    - i. It always seems to work that way, as we just don’t have any idea what tomorrow holds.
  - d. I’ve known Bob since I arrived at Ascension in 2007, and he has always been a steady presence in the background.
    - i. Bob just thrived doing things in the background... no one had to give him credit, and most of the time, no one knew all the things he did.
    - ii. Michele, my wife and the Office Manager, told me that she really misses Bob because he was here 3 days a week for many years... and he would always chat a little on his way to fixing something.
    - iii. I can’t tell you how many times he was involved in fixing a roof leak, a security alarm, a lighting issue, or heating and cooling problem – or so many other emergencies... even in the middle of the night.
      1. Not only that, but Bob was at every service, helping in the background – whether it was every Sunday as an usher, or on special services setting things up.
    - iv. If someone did a forensic investigation on this church, they would find Bob’s fingerprints on just about every part of it... outside and inside.
      1. I went to the maintenance closet and picked out a couple of things that remind me of Bob here at Ascension.
        - a. A Ryobi drill – Bob told me he was too cheap to buy the other brands, and this is probably one that he donated.
        - b. A putty knife and a paintbrush – for all the times he had to patch a wall after a leak or some other issue, and the countless times he painted all areas of the church.
        - c. A fluorescent light bulb – for all the times he had to change bulbs, replace ballasts, and put in new lighting.
      2. The interesting thing about Bob’s work is that most people wouldn’t notice much, but it was absolutely necessary to keep things going.
  - e. Bob had a special way of going about his business in the background, and he was such a good example of humility and service.

III. **Our readings in Philippians were highlighted in Bob's bible.**

- a. As Debbie and I talked about the readings we wanted to include, she said a theme emerged from these three... joy, thankfulness, and service.
- b. In many ways, Bob lived his life with these as his inspiration and model.
- c. Honestly, I never heard Bob say a negative thing about another person – and I think it was based on his thankfulness for God's blessings in his own life that he looked on others with compassion and a willingness to serve.
- d. St. Paul, who wrote this letter to the people of the Philippian Church, was probably in jail at the time... but he was still very thankful and filled with joy that God had blessed him and the Church.
  - i. It's like a contradiction – Paul is in jail, but through all the hardship is praising God with joy and thanksgiving.
  - ii. In all the suffering and challenges, Paul is thanking God for the people who worked alongside him, encouraging us to humility and service, and holding up Jesus as the main thing.
- e. Our friend Bob suffered a lot in his life.
  - i. The throat cancer he had way back in his 20's... the heart problems and the pacemaker... the skin cancer that he had to deal with constantly... a stroke... and after years of not being able to eat solid foods and a decline in his speech... a return of throat cancer.
  - ii. I'm not sure how joyful, thankful, and service-minded I would be with all that going on – but Bob's faith kept him in the game of life.
  - iii. The fact that he suited up and showed up for whatever was in front of him is a testament to how much the love of Christ controlled him.  
(2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
  - iv. Bob really loved Jesus, and even on his deathbed, he wanted to do the right thing by carefully weighing whether the time was right to stop fighting and let go of his earthly struggles.
- f. Do you want to know another earthly struggle that Bob had?
  - i. He always wondered how God could love and accept him – this guy who didn't deserve it.
  - ii. And if Bob were here today, some of you would encourage him by saying – “Bob! You're a great guy... you love people and do all kinds of good... you never talk bad about others... of course God loves and accepts you!”
    1. But this kind of thinking is simply not true.

IV. **I'm here to tell you one of the great mysteries of God.**

- a. By grace through faith we are saved, and not by our own works... it is a gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)
- b. In Philippians 3, Paul writes that everything else in the world is garbage compared to faith in Jesus – and especially that trying to be good and do right myself is not the point... but we are made right through faith in Christ.

- c. The great mystery is that we are sinful, broken people, just like Bob was, and yet, when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, He gives us the gift of eternal life.
- d. I can't tell you how many times I've heard people say that doing good things and leading a good life will get a person to heaven... like life is a scale of good and bad deeds, and if you tip it just enough to the good you will go to heaven.
- e. But the blessing is much better than that... because the sin we have in us, and the way it comes out of us will always tip the scale to bad – no matter how much good we try to do!
- f. Jesus came to this world in order to give us a chance... to give Bob a chance at redemption and life.
  - i. The way it worked was all the bad... the sin... the brutality of human nature and rebellion against God was not put on the bad side of our scales... but on Jesus when He went to the cross.
  - ii. No amount of good or kindness or service or any other thing could offset the sin and brokenness that was put on Jesus.
    - 1. But the Good News is that He took all that bad on Himself... He died with it to redeem us... and the only way to receive the gift He won for us is to have faith... to trust in Him.
  - iii. Bob believed in Jesus – and just as the Gospel lesson tells us today – Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life... no one gets eternal life in God's presence without Him.

V. **When I think back on Bob and his life in Christ**, I am reminded of an acronym that he really liked... J.O.Y.

- a. It stands for Jesus, Others, and You.
  - i. Bob's life reflected the gift of faith that God gave him long ago.
  - ii. In humility, Bob did not want the spotlight or the praise, he wanted to put Jesus first.
    - 1. He always came to services and Bible study in order to know Jesus more – and the more he knew Jesus the more his life reflected the Lord's love and compassion.
  - iii. Secondly, Bob put others ahead of himself.
    - 1. On countless occasions, he spent time in service and care for others – and maybe you were a recipient of the time and effort as he cared for the needs of people around him.
  - iv. Last but not least was Bob... and even though he considered himself least among us, Bob showed us what it's like to live for Jesus.
- b. Bob's joy was Jesus, others... and the life he lived in response to God's love for him.
  - i. We may miss Bob dearly... but remember, Jesus welcomed Bob home with an unbelievable celebration on June 8.

- ii. All the struggles and pain are now gone, and Bob's joy is transformed into eternal life with his Savior... in person.
- iii. Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God... believe in Jesus Christ... the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.