

# Bob Jennings' Funeral

Bob Jennings (January 2, 1949 - November 6, 2012)

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On behalf of the Jennings family, we would like to thank all of you for your love and your support in helping to bear the burden at this time. Glad to see all of your faces. It was Bob's desire that this time would be more of a time of worship than a time of funeral; and knowing Bob as we do, we're not surprised at that, are we? Bob loved the Lord with all his heart, served the Lord with all his strength to the very end. And we thank God for that. I would like for Ray Hargrave at this point to come to the front and open the meeting with a word of prayer. Ray Hargrave. Should we, shall we pray.

[Prayer] Bless You God of heaven. Bless You for being our God. Bless You for being a God of salvation. Thank You for making a way of forgiveness. Thank You for sending Your Son to shed His precious blood. Lord, we are here to honor a dear brother, a dear pastor. We are so indebted and grateful for all that he means to us, and all that he has done for us. Lord we are so thankful today that he is home with the Lord, that his faith has become sight, that his suffering has ended, the pain is gone, remaining sin is done away with, his spirit is perfected. Thank You Lord that You have taken him to heaven to see Your glory. Thank You that death has been swallowed up. No victory here, no sting here because of the blood of Christ. Thank You that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.

Thank You for his life, his example of godliness, his walk with the Lord, his love and service to the Lord. Thank You that he sought the Lord with all his heart. Thank You that he was a man after God's heart. Thank You for every desire of holiness that you put into him. Thank You that he fought the good fight all the way to the end against sin, the fight of faith. Thank You Lord for his friendship, for every kindness, for every help, for every meal at his table, for every word of encouragement, for all the consolation that he gave out. Thank You for every admonishment. Thank You for his smile, his wave. Thank You for his warm greetings. Thank You for his fervent love and care. Such a true friend to so many of us gathered here today. Thank You for his ministry, his leadership at Highway M. He was one that ruled well and worked hard at preaching and teaching, and so worthy of double honor.

Thank You Lord that he came to Sedalia many years ago and laid down his life for his sheep; for Your sheep. Thank You for every difficulty he endured, every reproach that he bore. Thank You for his love and knowledge of the word of God, that the word of Christ did dwell richly within him. Thank You that he paid attention to himself, and to his teaching, that he took pains with these things, he persisted in these things. Thank You for his boldness to proclaim the Gospel, both from the Gospel and from the streets. Thank You Lord for his faithfulness to teach the whole counsel of God, the word of God week by week, so carefully, so thoroughly.

We thank You for his life of prayer. He was devoted to interceding for the saints of God and for the souls of men. Thank You for the recent years of ministry with Clint, for the souls that were saved, for the families that have been added. Thank You for that rich time that he rejoiced in. Lord, thank You for every counsel, every word of wisdom. Thank You for his concern for righteousness.

Father we bless You for his family today. Thank You for the sustaining grace, the wonderful testimonies that we have seen Terri and the children have through all this. We pray and thank You for Terri, such a great helper to Bob, whether reading a book, or giving her input, or preparing a meal for many, or showing hospitality to all, or just a weekly godly example. Thank You for her and the children. Father we pray in the days ahead, that You would be their light in the times of darkness, that You would be their strength in the time of weakness, that You would be their constant companion in times of loneliness. Father would You whisper to them often, “ Be of good cheer, for I am with you always.”

Father, I personally thank You for the twenty-five years together, for the times of prayer, for the times of outreach, the work projects together. Father I thank You, I am indebted to You and to our dear brother for allowing me to have that honor, that privilege. Father we pray for the service. May Your name be glorified. May Bob be honored. May the souls of the saints be comforted and edified. And may some here that know You not, come to the saving knowledge of Your Son. Thank You and we pray in the precious name of Your Son. Amen.

Tom Jennings would you come.

Bob had asked me to read the poems on the back of the page here. But as I reminisce a long life with my brother, I have to think back to the days when we were in University together. He eventually went to Iowa State University, and it was during those times that I came to know Christ. We had grown up in Northeast Iowa and didn't know much of the Gospel. Didn't know much of anything about those things in those days. And when I heard the Gospel, my heart was struck and my life was changed from that day forward. And I knew immediately my brother didn't know the Lord. I knew if I didn't, he didn't. And so I went down to Ames—to the University of Iowa, to share with him, to tell him what had changed in my life, and how my life had been transformed.

As I look back over the forty-one plus years since that day, I've always known that my brother has faithfully served the Lord. He set his face like a flint. He loved the Lord every day of his life from that day forward. And that's a joy, true joy for me. As we cap the end of a life here on this earth, we recognize that all things shall come to pass. It's a short life that we live here; and yet every day that we live, when it's in the Lord, is one that's filled with joy, one that's filled with fulfillment; and that was Bob's story. We knew much joy in our childhood together. We enjoyed the many stories, and the many things that we shared. And Bob was perhaps better known for writing essays. I'm sure the editor here in Sedalia knows that well. I think over those twenty something years that he lived here, he probably wrote over a couple of hundred essays, letters to the editor, challenging, I hope, the city here to understand and to trust in the Lord as well. And I rejoice in that.

He was maybe less well known in writing poetry. And yet often, when he expressed his heart and the depths of his soul, he did it in writing a poem. And so I'd like to read the story that he wrote himself a couple of years ago, and share with you his heart:

This cancer gives a fellow time to do some heavy contemplating; to think about the past, the present, and those things that are waiting. It appears my life is almost done and I'm in the yellow leaf. Sixty-three years I've been around, and yet it seems so brief. My father was a farmer and had just a small purse. But he must have had some winsome ways, for my mother was a nurse. So I grew up on a Northeast Iowa farm where hills and prairie meet. Arlington community was full of friends and characters: some were very sweet.

After two years commuting to local UIC, it was on to ISU to obtain an agricultural degree. But there, my

heart displayed its true bent. My real major was just sin and further down I went. So in 1971, questioning the purpose of my life, sick of things and bored, my brother came to visit. To chase? “No,” he says. “I have found the Lord.” We opened the Bible. The answer seemed solid, real, and high. Why? It was death to self and all to God. His worthy name to glorify. Jesus said, You must be born again, a new creation, a miracle within. And thus God came. Drew me, won me, loved me, saved me, and I gave my heart to Him. The good news was good and Jesus died for sinners on that old cross. I believe He died to pay my debt, and thought of earning heaven was only total loss.

For three happy years, I worked for a company sowing seed and traveled round about. I began to realize God was calling me to sow true seed. I resigned and headed out. In 1980, I was joined in marriage to Terri, a true companion sent by heaven. From our union came such friends: Jared Lee, Bethany, Zachary, Evangeline, and Evan. My privileged years have been to preach the Holy Book and shepherd God’s beloved flock. Now facing death and eternity, my sure and only hope is Christ, the solid Rock. And Jesus will come again in power and He will shout and raise His chosen from their sleep. So march on, believer to Immanuel’s land. There’s little cause to weep. Here’s my story. I’m going to my Savior and a place that’s called my home. But it’s His story for God’s redeemed are called His own.

In a couple of weeks, families all over the United States will be gathering together to celebrate Thanksgiving. And those gatherings are always times of rejoicing, and fellowship, and feasting. And we always look forward to those times. But today, we have a gathering of family and friends for a different purpose. And it’s not a time of feasting, it’s a time of mourning. Instead of laughter, there’s weeping. And we don’t look forward to these times, we shrink back from these times and rightly so. And it’s in light of that fact that I want to talk to you about an amazing passage of Scripture. It’s found in Ecclesiastes chapter 7, verse 2 and this is what it says: “It’s better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting.” Better to come to a place like this than to go to a Thanksgiving gathering. Isn’t that amazing? How can this be? How could it be better to go to a funeral home than to a Thanksgiving get-together? In what sense could it be better? And the answer’s given in the last half of the verse.

He says it’s better to go to the house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting because death is the end of every man, and the living take it to heart. In that sense, it’s better to go to a house of mourning than a house of feasting because death is the end of every man, and the living take it to heart. In other words, in times like this, we have an opportunity to take to heart some things that we don’t normally take to heart, and want to take to heart. In other words, beloved, death is a wake up call. I don’t know what brought you here today and how well you knew Bob, but this is a wake up call. Right here is a wake up call for every one of us. We have an opportunity here today, if there’s ever a time for us to slow down long enough to look at what’s happening in this life, this is the time to slow down and look at it and face reality. Most people don’t do that.

Time after time, I’ve been to funerals (and you have too), where as soon as the time is over, the men gather outside, and they’re laughing and joking and talking about the weather and everything else to try to keep from thinking about the reality that was just staring them in the face a few minutes before. And so, I want to begin the three brief messages. We have three people that Bob has asked to speak here briefly, and he held us to that. I want to honor that. Probably should have looked at my watch when I got up here. But I want to begin the three messages that are going to be given today by sounding a wake up call. I know the other brothers are going to talk some about the hope that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. But for those of you who are not Christians, and even those who

are, I want to point out three things that we ought to take to heart today. Three truths that I think ought to shout to us from a time like this. What are they?

First one: Death is certain. Death is certain and that's in the text that I just read. He says it's better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting because death is the end of every man. Death is the end of every man. In just a few more heartbeats, every single one of us in this room right now will be where Bob is; we'll be in a casket awaiting burial. We don't really believe that. I'm a pastor and I don't really believe it. But every now and then, I get a little glimpse for two or three minutes of the fact that I really am going to die. And you know, it's going to happen, it's going to come. You remember Jesus said, "Father, the hour is come." That was the time for the cross.

We're going to, it's really real. Every single one of us, we're going to come to that point where the hour is come; and look, it's me dying this time. Not somebody else. In just a few more hellos and goodbyes, it's going to be over. "What is your life?" James says, "It's even a vapor that appears for a little while — It's like in the wintertime when you see the little puff of breath — and then it's gone. I met Bob my first class at college, 7:30 English class. He was a J, and I was an L. And the teacher wanted to try to learn our names so she put everybody in alphabetical order. There we were. Forty-five years. It doesn't seem like forty-five years, I can tell you that. The time flies by, and I'm experiencing now, and some of you are, where years go by like months, and months go by like weeks. That's the way it feels. The time is flying by. Death is the great certainty of life. Isn't that an amazing thing? You want to talk about a great certainty of life, it's that you're going to die. It shows no favoritism, makes no exceptions, one death per person, one hundred percent absolute certainty. Death comes both to old and young. It comes to the worst and to the best. It comes to the most cultured and the most common. It doesn't matter who you are here today, you are going to die. You are going to die. It's going to happen very quickly. So let me ask you this question, Are you willing to take it to heart? Are you willing to take it to heart? The Bible says it's appointed unto men once to die and after this comes judgment. So the question is, What if it were today? Are we ready to face a one hundred percent Holy God in judgment?

I grew up going to church. I didn't know the Lord at all. I wasn't a Christian and I had in my mind that when we die, there would be these big scales, and if our good works outweighed our bad works, everything would be alright. Well there are gonna be some scales. The problem is, it's not your good works and your bad works, it's on one side it's you and on the other side, it's the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you don't weigh exactly the same that He does; In fact, if you don't have His very righteousness, you're gonna perish. You've got to have the very righteousness of Christ in order to be saved.

There's no one here today — think of this — there's no one here, every one of you is going to die, and there's not one of you that has to go to hell. You could have the righteousness of Christ laid to your account. You could be made completely clean, and pure, and right, if you just repent of your sin and your selfishness, and put your trust in the Lord Jesus and give up. God says there in Ezekiel, Why will you die? Why will you die? Why will you insist on dying when you could have eternal life? Well death is certain.

Second thing that we ought to get: Life is uncertain. We ought to learn that here today. Life is uncertain. I can remember a little over two years ago when the furthest thing from our minds was that Bob was going to die before any of us. I mean we didn't imagine that. And all of a sudden there it is; and everything changes. Life is

uncertain. We don't know what a day might bring forth. Any one of us here this afternoon could be gone by tomorrow. And that's not morbidity, it's not pretending, it's just reality. "Boast not yourself of tomorrow. You don't know what a day will bring forth." And James again says, "We ought to say if the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." In a moment everything can change.

I was thinking that a few weeks ago, I gave a message on providence that I've given in several places; and I was reminded of a story my grandfather told me of someone here in Sedalia. Two brothers, there was a thunderstorm, and one of the brothers was getting off his horse and running into the house and a bolt of lightning struck him, killed him right there. The other brother got on his horse, rode across Black Creek and came over to tell the family, and he got off his horse, he was running into the house and another bolt of lightning struck him and killed him on the way into the house. Those are realities. That doesn't happen very often, but it happens. Life is uncertain. In a moment, everything can change. So facts like this ought to make us tremble.

We're talking about conviction of sin a few days ago, and I thought of this, I wasn't able to look this up but I think that I read somewhere that on the top of the Washington Monument, it looks like it's a sharp point; actually it's about a nine inch square. Could you imagine if somebody lifted you by helicopter and set you down on that nine inch square on top of the Washington Monument? You would not fall asleep.

But you know, the terror and the danger is much, much greater than that for every person who doesn't know the Lord. The position is much more precarious than that. That's reality! It's not imagination, it's reality. I heard a true story of a farmer, that they sat down at the table to eat and a friend was visiting. And the farmer stopped him and he said wait a minute, you're getting ready to pray here and thank God for this food. And he said, I earned this food myself. I worked hard to earn this food, we're not going to thank God for it, I earned it. Can you imagine the arrogance?

There was a king in the Old Testament. There was a special judgment pronounced on him. A hand appeared on the wall and said, "your kingdom is weighed in the balances and found wanting." And God said, "I'm going to destroy you and take everything." What was the sin that that king had committed? Well it wasn't all of his atrocities, which I'm sure there were many that God blamed him for, but what was it? He said "the God in whose hands are your life-breath and your ways, you've not glorified." God, your life-breath and your ways— that farmer who wouldn't give glory to God for his food, his life-breath was in God's hand, and he refused to glorify Him. All God has to do is remove His hand and you're gone. Well, let me ask you a question: Are you glorifying God in your life? Bob was glorifying God with his life. Life is uncertain.

And finally, the last thing that we ought to learn from this is that the world is not normal. Beloved this state of affairs is not normal. It's not normal for people to die. It's not normal for people to rot away and their bones to decay and then to be gone. Those things are not normal. The world has not always been this way. The Bible tells us that we live in a fallen, abnormal world. Death and disease and tears, and tragedy, and wars and evil, have not always been. There's an amazing verse in the Bible, the shortest verse in the bible: "Jesus wept." And the reason it's so amazing, He was at the tomb of Lazarus. And He was just ready to raise Lazarus from the dead. But yet He was weeping. Why was He weeping? I think He was weeping because He felt the terrible agony, and sin, and disruption, and misery of this world.

Beloved, things are not normal. It's not normal. Sin and death, and decay, and wars, and evil, are not nor-

mal. And I want to emphasize, it's not like every philosophy teaches this. It's only Christianity. You come to other philosophies, you've got to start with this world as being normal and try to make sense out of it. You can't do that. There isn't any sense in this world; the way it is now. But according to the Word of God, it hasn't always been this way. God created things good, and man has sinned and man has rebelled and turned away from Him; and God, in wrath has turned away from man, and righteous judgment rests upon this fallen world.

The world is not the way it was meant to be. And things are only going to get worse. And the Lord Jesus said there's going to be wars and rumors of wars, and famines and earthquakes. I know a lady, her son was complaining about God and said, "Wait if there is a God, why does He allow this and that to happen?" She said, "Well, son, according to the Bible, it's going to get worse." And it's going to get worse. And in the end, there's going to be a lake of fire, a lake of fire. And the Bible talks about a bottomless pit. An abyss. You know the term abyss? Abissus, no bottom. The world's not normal.

But Christ has come to restore things and to raise up a new creation for all who are His people. For those who belong to Him, there's a promise of a new heaven and a new earth. Let me just read a few verses in closing. Revelation 21:3-6, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them. And they shall be His people, and God Himself shall dwell among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. And there shall no longer be any death. There shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain. The first things have passed away.' And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And he said, 'Write, for these words are faithful and true.' And He said to me, 'It's done.' I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. And listen to this, 'I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.'" Think of that. What a promise! What a hope for all who will recognize their lostness, and their thirst, and their dryness, and their barrenness, and cast themselves upon Him.

When I was thinking about all these things that have come to pass, and about Bob's death, it struck me just a little bit more, the reality of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. He rose from the dead. We're not talking about nice little stories to make us feel better. We're talking about an empty tomb. Christ is risen, the first fruits of those who sleep. And so we have a concrete, real, living hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And all the wrongs are gonna be righted, and everything that's messed up is gonna be made right. Amen.

I was thinking as I was sitting there, and I think all of you that knew Bob would agree, better to be mourning today and to have known Bob, than not be mourning, and to not have known him. Right? I've only known Bob for 9 years. About 9 years ago right now. I met him, of all places, for the first time in Bucharest, Romania. And Darin Rodmantold me, "Look for the guy that looks like Abraham Lincoln." And sure enough, he did. I've only known Bob for 9 years and the Lord allowed us to become close friends. Probably the more I got to know about Bob, I came to realize everybody probably regarded him as a close friend. He was that kind of guy. I loved Bob. And I know my life, my life isn't the same. It isn't the same having known him. It isn't the same having had his influence there.

I'd like to read a text, very familiar. , "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers (brethren), about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. Just several weeks back, I don't remember if I called Bob or he called me, and, in typical fashion he said, "Well do you have a moment?" As though I might be too busy to take his call. And I was thinking this might be the last time I get to talk to him in this world.

“Bob, I have all, all the time in the world.” And as I was talking to him, he was so full of joy. And I said, “Bob I know that we don’t grieve as those who have no hope, but we still grieve.” I said, “Bob you know I’m gonna take out my cell phone, and I’m gonna hit the “B”, and I’m gonna hit the “O”, and when your number comes up, you’re not gonna be at the other end anymore.”

And that’s the reality for us. In whatever days, quick and fleeting though they be, the rest of the time we have here, we’re gonna miss Bob, and we’re gonna grieve. And the influence that he had in our lives, it’s not gonna be there firsthand. The memory of him certainly will abide. The apostle says, he doesn’t want us ignorant concerning those who fall asleep. Isn’t that interesting language? And that’s not the only time that’s found. Daniel talks that way. He talks about those who sleep in the dust. And of course, Jesus spoke of Lazarus, “ he’s asleep.” And Paul used that terminology; again and again you find it throughout the book of Acts.

Asleep. You know, I never used that terminology when I was lost. Those first 25 years of my life, I never heard this. Maybe some of you young people, if you’ve grown up in a church, you’re familiar with that language even if you’ve not yet come to the Lord. But that was terminology I was totally unfamiliar with. As a lost person, people die. You talk about death - they’re dead. And in certainly the Bible, we find that kind of language there. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. That’s terminology that’s there. But what I found is when I became a Christian, suddenly just to talk about somebody— and I haven’t had that many occasions. In my twenty-two years as a Christian, this is the first time a close friend has died. And yet as a Christian, I think we tend to start to draw back from that language; that he died, or ‘death.’ Why? Because Jesus comes along and He just, He lays down: “those who abide in My Word, they will not see death.”

I mean, Jesus said in John 6 concerning Him, the Bread of Life. He says the one that eats it, He said they eat of it and may not die. And didn’t He say to Martha, the same kind of terminology? Those that are alive and believe in Him, they will not die, they shall not taste death, they shall not see death. Bob is not dead! I mean, we are certain of that. If there’s anything we’re certain of, he has not died. That ‘death’ terminology, that ‘sleep’ terminology — I mean that’s mainly what we have here. You know Paul said, “corruptible, weak, dishonorable.” I mean, Bob didn’t want us to see him as he is in that box. Why? that’s the dishonorable thing. There’s no glory, there’s weakness there. That’s just the seed.

But Bob lives! He’s alive, that’s our hope! Isn’t the blood of Christ precious? I mean, the death of a friend like this looks us right in the face. But I find that, you know, maybe we ought to move even further with our language. That death language. That’s what I knew when I was lost. I can remember when my aunt died. We were a bunch of catholics. When she died, I wept. I wept hopelessly. I had no hope. There were several times there where I wept uncontrollably. I have not wept that way for Bob because I don’t think the same way. Because I know where Bob is. I have hope, he had hope. I mean, James told me the night before Bob died, James told me of his confidence. He said he has no fear. Of course, he had no fear, he had hope. That blood of Christ. No hope—What I had when I was a catholic and my aunt died of cancer. No hope. But Bob died with hope.

But here’s the thing, I mean, you go back, you move from this death language to this sleep language. Maybe there’s even another perspective Scripture throws at us. And it’s David’s words back in Psalm 17. Again this is a verse many of you are familiar with. “As for me, I shall” —this is Psalm 17:15 — David says, “As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.” Not that his face is righteous. David is saying, I, in righteousness, I will be righ-

teous and I will behold your face. And he says, “When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.” And, I don’t believe that the idea here is that David is in the likeness of Christ, as true as that is. It seems that the reality here is, this is the likeness, and the idea that this is the semblance, this is the image of God that he sees; that he is before. And he says, “When I awake,” — I mean we move from this death language to sleep language; but if we even have the right perspective, it’s “when I awake.”

I mean, Bob has awakened. If you look at this, it’s like we are the ones that are asleep! He is awake! I mean, you know what it’s like, I was just thinking about what it was like as I woke up this morning. You know how that is. Suddenly you go from the realm of dream. I mean, have you thought about Bob? Tuesday morning, as he laid there. Unconscious or maybe semi-conscious— maybe he was hearing and we don’t know; but unresponsive. And yet, his heart still beat. I mean can you imagine what happened right there before noon on that day? There was a moment when suddenly Bob began to awake. I mean, there was that first moment when light from outside this world, came into the darkness. There was that moment when he heard a voice or a note, or when light shone upon his soul.

I read of one woman. She said, as she was dying, “I see Him, I see Him. It’s all light.” I mean, there was that moment when it broke in upon Bob’s soul. And suddenly the voice began to call him away. Suddenly the pain began to be stripped away. Suddenly the sinful body was being separated. I mean, with senses. Sixth sense. Senses outside of what this body has, he began to hear and see; and it was over. The journey was over. And he saw His face. And i can’t go there. Bob’s there. But we don’t know. We don’t know what that’s like. I mean, those who swim in the glory of God for a thousand ages. I mean, could they put it into even terms we can understand. But suddenly he was there, and it happened. And it’s so hard for us to grasp but it happened, and he’s gone. He fought the good fight of faith, and it’s over.

And you notice how he starts this verse, “As for me.” What’s that all about? Well, there’s a comparison. You know, right before this, he talks about the men of the world whose portion is in this life. But as for me, what? His portion isn’t in this life. The portion’s not here. You know what? When you get here and your portion was in this life, you did die. You are dead. It’s all gone. It’s all stripped away. You lived for this life, you lived for health here, you lived for money here, you lived to enjoy the things here, and the stuff here, and the pleasures here. When you get here, you are dead and it’s over.

But his portion (David’s and Bob’s) was not here. Their portion wasn’t here. They lived for something else and now they both have it. And as Bob said when he was just recently with us, “You are not far behind.” And we’re not. We’re moving quickly.

What’s your portion? O, the two things most desirable. “In righteousness.” Can you imagine Bob? I mean, for the first time in righteousness, he beheld His face. All that fogged His image, looking through and into that glass darkly and dimly, is just stripped away. Just as that lady said. That sister in the Lord as she was dying, “I see Him, I see Him. It’s all light.” All the darkness, the veil is pulled back. And he sees it. Don’t you want to see what Bob is seeing right now? I mean, we mourn because of what we have lost; not because of what he has lost. He’s lost nothing and gained everything! His portion, not in this life.

When it was all death; when that’s the way we talked, it was very fearful. It was the unknown. There’s still such an unknown about it. Oh but there is a glory! Doesn’t that resound in your own heart what David says here?



“As for me.” Can you say that, Christian? As for me. We’re not like those whose portion is here. As for me, I want that righteousness and that face forevermore. That is our hope. That is Bob’s hope. We have a hope. We don’t grieve like those that have no hope. O we have a hope. The blood of Christ just speaks: Hope. Amen.

The apostle John said in Revelation 14:13, And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.”

On Tuesday, a burning and a shining light went out in Sedalia. And for almost three decades, shone brightly here.

My few minutes of this message will unapologetically be a biographical honor of brother Bob. God gave us all an amazing gift in Bob Jennings. His life, his legacy and his departure. And it is right to honor and reflect on such a life. Paul did that with colleagues that he esteemed and recognized the grace that was in them. He said “Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier.” “Tychicus, the beloved brother, and faithful minister and servant,” he said. And Peter said of Silvanus, “A faithful Brother.” — terms of endearment.

This week, Paul Washer said, “Bob Jennings was the most Christlike man that I’ve ever met.” This morning, Conrad Murrell when asked, What would you like expressed here today? He thought a moment. And then only the way he can say it, he said, “Bob Jennings, the most dedicated and sincere Christian I’ve ever known.”

All these things describe Bob. And all week, what I felt is, how difficult it is to realize that he really is gone. That how could he really now be taken from us. The best husband and father, a family could ever have. A beloved pastor. And many of the time, an imminent preacher. A true friend and a blameless example to all. And as of Tuesday, now he is among that very real cloud of witnesses above, whose lives and faith are cheering us on now. He’s among them today.

His life was shaped by the perfect providence of God and the great mercy of Christ. He loved to tell how Tom came to him at college, and Bob basically said, “let’s go partying.” Tom courageously said, “No, that’s behind me. I have come to Christ.” And God used Tom to see Bob come to faith in Christ. And the ripple effects, who could measure? His early Christian life was rightly and deeply shaped by godly lives that God sent to him. (John and Virginia Beshears, Vaylard Lorna Zupke, Conrad Murrell, Keith McCloud, Charles and Dick, who became his co-pastors). His Bible school was a gravel truck on a Zupke farm. And there, he prayed and learned the word of God. More and more, he was taught of God. After Iowa, a short period in Canada with Keith McCloud, praying and doing evangelism. And then to Kirksville, to work with Dick and Charles, and Gospel labor in the church there until 1983. I remember Terri sitting in their home in Kirksville, Bob saying, “Brothers, should we go to Sedalia?” Cold and sent to Sedalia. He said, “Should we go to Sedalia?” And now, three decades later, here we are. A church that has held forth the Gospel. Bob was uniquely molded by God into what he was. You know, you can talk and read about great men of the past generations: the McCheynes, the Brainerds, the Jim Elliots. They had nothing on Bob Jennings in my estimation. He stood shoulder to shoulder with such men. His life really was a living epistle, known and read of all men. Just the fragrance of his life. What a gift God gave to us in Bob Jennings.

His life. And then his legacy. I mean, think of the legacy that he has left all of us. The legacy to Terri and Jared and Bethany and Zachary and Evan and Evangeline and the grandchildren. And for the church here in Sedalia. And for all the Christians who knew him. The legacy is amazing. And this town of Sedalia. Tom, I think it was

closer to three hundred letters to the editor over almost 30 years. It might be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for Sedalia. To have such a true prophet in your midst for three decades. What a legacy.

How well he ran the race, how well he finished the course with joy. How consistently he discharged his duty. How purely he walked, in and out, among believers and unbelievers. How much he exemplified the humility of Christ-likeness, true greatness. How he prayed, how he preached, how he pastured. How he exhorted, how he encouraged. Given to hospitality; he was a lover of good men and a lover of the souls of men. How many came into the home of the Jennings, and left strengthened and stirred and challenged and encouraged; having taken a refreshing drink from a deep well of the Jennings' lives.

How every grace of God really was eminently displayed in his life and walk. And it's not hero-worship to recognize that, and say it. It's right. So many people widely were significantly impacted by Bob and his ministry that he never knew about. Many he never even knew about, because they didn't get to tell him. His legacy is big and lasting. Mighty fruit that remains.

And then, not only his life and his legacy, but his departure. John spoke of Peter's departure in the New Testament when he said, "Signifying by what death he should glorify God." This was the death by which Bob Jennings glorified God. You know, the Lord is so varied in His ways with the death of His servants. Moses dies at 120 strong; Jim Elliot speared to death at 28; Leonard Ravenhill dies of a stroke at 87; Keith McCloud, cancer, 74; Lloyd Jones, cancer, 81; and Bob Jennings, cancer, 63 years old.

His departure — you know, that is one of the terms the Bible uses about this. Departing to be with Christ, which is far better. The Bible calls it, "going the way of all the earth." It calls it "going to sleep and waking," as Tim said. It calls it, "having an abundant entrance." Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. It's not precious to us though often. Our desire and Christ's desire, in this situation, differed (were in conflict.)

I remember when I first heard of Bob's cancer. I prayed for a period and I said, "Lord, he's so much more fruitful than me; he's so much more needed than me. Would you let me have the cancer and I'll go in his place. Let him remain." And how many others prayed over these two and a half years, "Lord, leave him here; leave him here for a while." But our desire and Christ's desire differed and were in conflict about the time of the passing of Bob Jennings.

Charles Spurgeon spoke about this on why the righteous are taken when it seems like the church still needs them. Spurgeon said, "O death, why do you touch the trees that have spreading branches? Why do you snatch away the excellent of the earth? If you must use your axe, use it upon the trees which yield no fruit. But why strike down the goodly cedars of Lebanon? But no; death smites the best, the most generous, the most prayerful and the most devoted. Every time a believer leaves earth for paradise, it is an answer of Christ's prayer for them to be with Him.

When it's time for beloved saints to depart, we don't want it. But there comes a point, doesn't there? There comes a time that our days are over, our journey's done. And Christ desires them to come home. "Father," He prayed, "I desire that they be with Me where I am." We desired for Bob to remain with us. Christ desired for him to come to Him.

The issue is not, "Lord, why did You have to take Bob Jennings now?" But rather let's realize and recognize what an amazing gift God gave to us in Bob Jennings. Such men only come along once in a while. The Keith McCloud or Leonard Ravenhill or Bob Jennings.

We'll miss him. We'll miss everything about him. There's hardly been an hour in the last two years that my heart hasn't been in Sedalia, praying. And in the last two years, he showed us how to die in faith; with courage, love, self-denial, in preparation. He was always leading by example, and he did to the very end. He's run on ahead of us to heaven. And I had this verse that Tim took as his text, that Bob experienced this Tuesday. "I shall behold Your face in righteousness, and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness." Bob did that Tuesday morning. And now, he waits for us to join him.

And you know what he would say to us today. He would say, "Beloved, seek Christ. Press on. Lay hold. Fight the good fight of faith. Persevere to the end. Lay hold on eternal life." That's his life, his legacy, and that's what he was saying till the last hours of his life. Amen.

At this point in the meeting, we'd like to give opportunity for any to briefly come out on Bob's influence in their lives or something they'd like to share along those lines. If you'd just raise your hand, I'll bring the microphone to you, if there are any that would like to say anything.

And Vaylard, if I recall correctly, when he first met Bob, Tom had shared with Bob and Bob gave his life to Christ. And I think it would seem in this order, if I remember correctly. Tom invited Bob, maybe, to a Navigators conference over at Boone, Iowa. And Vaylard was there. And if I understand, that was the first time Vaylard met him. And Tom was there with another, and some business or something, took him away from the table. And Bob was there with Vaylard. And Bob said, "I don't know why I'm here. All my friends are over in Iowa State. I don't know what I'm doing here." And Vaylard said, "God gave me these words: Moses chose to endure afflictions with His people rather than the fleeting pleasures of sin." And Bob got some comfort there. God seemed to seal that to his heart.

And now, we have got the pleasure and the honor to witness that. He had set his face as a flint, as Tom said, to the cross with Christ. He gave his life away and died on that cross with Christ. And we saw his life was a testimony to that. And Bob, that's what he would have us to do. If any thing would come out of this, it's that the Word of God would pierce our hearts, and we would set our life and our heart and face as a flint to endure afflictions with God's people. Throw away the world; it's not worth anything. And we thank the Lord for Bob. There was no greater humble man. I don't know. I felt like a Timothy under a Paul, I felt like an Elisha under Elijah. He was a great, marvelous brother. Thank you.

I want to say that I'm very thankful for Bob's faithful pasturing of the Highway M Chapel all these years. He's been an influence on my precious wife all the years she was there, and her family. And I have to say that he's the best modern day example of fighting the good fight to the end. And we could all afford to remember this when our time comes. He's just been such a good example. I can't think of anybody that could fight a fight like that, just the way he did. He did exactly like Paul says in the New Testament and I feel like we all need to model our lives, or at least the end of our lives especially after what he did.

Bob was my longest friend, and now Tom is. We grew up together. Our parents were friends. We went through grade school, high school and I need to talk about that time. Most of you knew Bob as he was a pastor. But I knew him as a close friend. My earliest memory, my earliest childhood memory is of Bob pulling me on a slip. And I still have a picture of that, and I can walk to the very spot where the picture was taken. Past that, through grade school and high school, Bob was a leader. He was senior class president.

But there was a side most of you don't know. He was also the class clown, and he couldn't help himself. He was so naturally funny, he had us laughing in stitches constantly. But he couldn't help himself, that was his nature through high school and the first couple of years at college. He also could park an 18-foot car in a 19-foot slot at twenty miles an hour! And I don't know how anyone else could ever do that, but I've seen him also do that.

And if you have told me, back in 1969, that Bob would marry, have five children and become pastor of a church, and have people give the testimony that's given today, I wouldn't have believed you. But at that time, I didn't understand the power of conversion.

I was looking back at many of the emails that Bob and I had shared together and reading back through some of them. I had made a covenant to Bob that my great regret is that I did not meet him earlier in life. I had heard a sermon of his, one time, and I was impacted by the sermon so much I got online and looked up this man in Sedalia, Missouri. I figured I'd venture to make a phone call and somehow got a hold of him. Warm and friendly voice, we talked for a while about the message. I thanked him for it and he said, "But one day, we'll have to meet." And we did.

But I've shared a story I wanted to share because we think of this man, he's been referred to as a pastor and as a prophet in this voice. We were at the University of Missouri, Columbia. I know, I believe Charles and Mona would remember this well. We were doing open-air preaching, and there was a group of people that decided that they wanted to sing. And there was about a dozen that gathered behind me when I was in the circle, preaching. And they were very disruptive to the Word of God being preached. They were singing at the top of their lungs and I had no amplification, and there was about a dozen of them.

They were in a big circle and trying to drown out the preaching of the Word, and who comes out from somewhere, but Bob Jennings. The man had cancer. And I'll never forget what happened. Now I am standing there and trying to strain my voice and Bob literally walks into the middle of this about 12 or 13 people singing. And he starts to look at everyone of them; and I'm watching this while I continue to speak. And he's pointing at each one of them and he's rebuking them. I could not hear what he said but I asked a little bit later. And he's pointing, and rebuking each one of them for disrupting, attempting to disrupt the going forth of the Word of God. I've never forgotten that picture and I'll never forget it. That a man weakened with cancer, calls on the strength of the Lord, and stands in the middle of this group without any fear of man. We all knew him to be such.

He begins to rebuke people because Bob was concerned about the going forth of the Word of God, something that was so precious to him. But you know, we can be assured today that though he is dead, he still speaks. Many of the things that Bob has written will continue to be read. His sermons, James and others have made sure will continue on. People would stumble across those messages; and it's just going to be like the stories I've been reading through the books of 1st and 2nd Kings about Elisha, he'd been buried and thrown into the ground. He was buried, and here comes somebody else who remain nameless, and was thrown in on top of Elisha. Elisha was dead, but this guy springs back to life.

And there's going to be a sense where people come into contact with Bob Jennings, his sermons, his writings, his words. And may the Lord bless those times where God the Spirit would take the words and the writings and the sermons of Bob Jennings, and bring forth glorious new birth in regeneration. Bob is not silent.

Would there be one more. Recently, I've been going through Bob's binders of sermons, and I found a ser-

mon note from a funeral he preached years ago, and one of the lines just hit me. He said the most important thing in life is to be ready for death: So ready to die that when it comes time to die, all you have to do is die. And for the last two months, me and my wife, Bob's daughter, were living with him. And I'm telling you, all he had to do was die. He was so spiritually set, trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. All he had to do was die.

The last two weeks, he was in a wheelchair. He had no strength, we had to wake up in the middle of the night to help him to use the restroom. That was the biggest trial at the end of the rope for him. The biggest trial at the end of his life was how to get out of the wheelchair to use the restroom. That was it. That was the biggest trial because he was so spiritually set. And that stuck out to me in such a way there was no fear. There was no lack of assurance.

And he went on to say in an article about Paul. Paul had such assurance, he didn't say "I hope so; I might be saved; I'm likely saved; possibly I'm saved; maybe I'm saved." That wasn't Paul's attitude. Paul the apostle had no hesitation. He didn't speculate, there was no ambiguity. He had infallible assurance because salvation is not based on good works. It's not on good intentions. It's based on the finished work of Jesus Christ. And Bob put his faith in Christ. And so, going down to the end, his faith proved true. And so often, we hear this cliché "he's in a better place" and all of that. But it's so true with Bob. I mean, just to think he's resting from his labors right now, just makes me want to get to the end. I mean, we all have to die to ourselves a thousand million more times and we've got to keep seeking God in prayer. We can't give up. And Bob didn't, even to the end. And just to see him die so well is just so encouraging, the confidence in Christ. And so I know Bob would pray that everyone here would have that. To not have it is a miserable place to be.

I press on, that I may know Him. He is looking forward when he shall know the Lord as He is known, face to face. But everyone who has that hope in Him, he does the same right now. "Lord, I want to know you more and more, right now." I mean, what woman is engaged to a man that doesn't want to know more intimacy right now before that wedding day? What miner comes into a goldmine and is satisfied with the first day's haul? No! He wants more and more right now!

Paul says, "That I may know Him!" Now keep in mind, we're talking about pressing on. From what? Paul didn't you know the Lord? "O yes! But I want to know Him more!" Didn't you have the power of the resurrection? "Yes, I want more." The power of the resurrection, he was always talking about this power. The kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power. I labor, striving according to His power— which mightily works in me. The power of the resurrection, to overcome sin.

You see, when an airplane, when it loses power, it starts going down. The gravity starts overtaking it and the plane goes down. When the power comes back, then it's able to overcome the force, the pull of gravity. It's the same way with sin, with lust, with that old depravity that remains in us. The power of the resurrection! Paul says, "That's what I need! That's what I want. That's what I press on for, here, right now." The power to say "yes," and the power to say "no." The power to keep my mouth shut. The power to not retaliate; not take into account the wrong suffered. The power to control my mind, my mental thoughts. The power to get out of bed to study the Bible; to rise up and pray.

You know, it is ridiculous, isn't it, for us to pray, "Lord lead me not into temptation," and then turn right around and put ourselves in the place of temptation. Paul, what did you press on with? with what attitude? "I press

on with single-minded devotion to Jesus. I count it all loss, to gain Christ!" Rutherford says, "Put a low value on everything else, but Christ." And that, Paul did. He says, "it's rubbish compared to the surpassing value." I count it all loss that I may gain Christ! Let nothing get in the way.

We ought to be gripped with the realization that we're not there yet! We haven't made it to heaven yet. We've still got ground to take, we still got a race to run. We've come this far, but we can't look back at other runners, we can't look back at the ground we've covered; you're sure to be hindered or destroyed. You've got to look forward, headlong; stretching; reaching; gaping; running; pressing for the mark, all the way to the end. Or do you think that you have pretty well seen all that God would have for you. Remember godly men like Job, like Daniel, like Ezekiel, like John the apostle. When God came to these godly men and revealed Himself in a fuller way, they were like dead men! What have we seen of God? It could be compared to a grain of sand on the whole seashore. We've but seen the fringes of His ways. Much reason to press on. We ought to take the attitude of old Caleb. Towards the end of his life, he was still saying, "Give me this hill country, I want more!"

Remember brethren, God is not going to be ashamed to call you His people. If you're living for the heavenly city, if you're living for the heavenly country, He's not going to be ashamed to be called your God; to identify with you; to own you and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And He'd say, "I know you." My love to you, my love to you. Farewell. O, goodbye. There's no goodbye! We'll see in a little while. You won't be far behind me.

Shall we close in prayer. Our Father, we're gathered here to glorify You, and to magnify You, and to worship You. I thank You for putting Bob Jennings in my life for 45 years, and I'm reminded this time of Isaiah speaking as what he said, "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." Our Father, in the death of this friend, I pray that we would see the Lord, high and lifted up, sitting on a throne. His train filling the temple. I want to thank You, Father, for bringing Clint to Sedalia, and giving him this time with Bob, and enabling Clint to step in and fill the pulpit. We're reminded of the words of Job, who said, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It says, "In all this, Job didn't sin and he didn't charge God foolishly." And we don't want to do that either, Lord. We want, by our presence here, to tell Terri and the children and grandchildren and relatives, that we loved him too. And I thank You for every book he ever gave me. I thank You for all the sound counsel. I thank You for the reproof and correction. And Father, I want to just close with this verse of a familiar hymn. "May thy rich grace impart strength to our fainting hearts. Our zeal inspire. As Thou hast died for me, So may my love to Thee, pure, warm and changeless, be a living fire! In Christ's name, Amen.