

“How’s the Fishing?” – Pr Jim Sprengle – John 14:1-6
Kevin McInaney Memorial – February 16, 2024

- I. **Merci, Matthias, Keilah**, and all the family and friends gathered here today, grace, peace, and mercy are yours through our Living Savior Jesus Christ.
- II. **Very few people really know...**
 - a. Very few people understand what it’s like to walk through an illness like ALS with their loved one, and even then, each individual journey is different.
 - b. Kevin was just going along with his life, thinking about retirement and spending more time fishing... as he had almost crossed the finish line from full-time employment.
 - c. And then, with no warning, things began to change... first it seemed like a pulled muscle... then it progressed to no feeling in his feet and legs... and after all the tests (which seemed like forever) finally came through – a diagnosis... ALS.
 - d. For all the years of planning ahead, this changed everything – and Kevin and the family began to live one day at a time.
 - i. Each holiday a gift... each milestone like anniversaries and birthdays a gift... each day together a gift.
 - e. In one sense we feel a great sense of relief that he no longer suffers, but it’s also a giant space in our lives that he no longer occupies.
 - f. Kevin said it many, many times, but he just wanted to go home to be with Jesus... He was confident in the promise we read from John 14 – that Jesus had prepared a mansion for him, awaiting his arrival.
 - g. Kevin is now with his Savior, Jesus, occupying the place that was prepared for him... because he had faith.
- III. **I’ve known Kevin since I came to Ascension in 2007.**
 - a. He was a helper at the Soccer Clinic, and he was usually supporting Mike Fogarty in getting things ready... handing out flyers to the schools to promote it... and just being around to help throughout the week.
 - b. Along with the Soccer Clinic, Kevin also supported the program we used to do here that included English as a second language classes for parents and their kids attended Rainbow Roundup (similar to Sunday School).
 - i. Kevin would go out and pick up a bunch of kids in the van, drop them off, and then go back out and pick up more.
 - c. Kevin also went on several mission trips, and he went to Guatemala on the last mission trip we did there, which is where we got the picture for his obituary.
 - d. If you didn’t pick up on it, Kevin wanted to share Jesus with people... he volunteered in ways that he could support the mission of God – which is to bring all nations to faith in Jesus for their salvation.

- e. You see, Kevin had a conversion experience as a young man that drove much of his faith life from that point forward...
 - i. He was drinking and not living right... when one day got in a car wreck that could have easily killed him... and there he saw bright light and voice told him to change his life or he would die... he got on his knees and sought God's forgiveness.
 - ii. Kevin stayed sober from that point forward and became a follower of Jesus for the rest of his life.
 - iii. Kevin knew the transformative power of Christ in his own life, and it was something he always wanted others to know about too.
 - iv. In fact, whenever I would ask him what he wanted me to pray about, he would always mention the people who don't believe in Jesus, that they would come faith.
- f. I guess you could say that Kevin was a fisherman – not only fishing in the rivers, ocean, or lakes, but a fisherman of people.

IV. **Jesus tells His followers to fish for people.**

- a. When He called Peter and Andrew to follow Him, He tells them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)
 - i. The one thing that always amazed me is how many of Jesus' followers dropped everything and followed after Him.
 - ii. In some ways, Kevin also dropped much of his former way of life, following after his Savior from that point forward.
- b. It's hard to say how many people were impacted by Kevin's faith and his support of the mission and ministry here at Ascension.
 - i. I often say that the Soccer Clinic probably averaged 350 kids, not including servant coaches, parents, volunteers, or nighttime activity...
 - 1. In the 16-17 years of Soccer Clinics, that's just under 6000 young people who heard the message of salvation.
 - ii. In addition to the Rainbow Roundup, the mission trips and other activities, Kevin had a part in sharing Jesus with thousands of people.
 - iii. He was a pretty good fisherman for Jesus.

V. **The best part is that it's all about Jesus!**

- a. We might get caught up in the good deeds of a person and forget that Jesus was behind it all.
- b. Lots of people would say that our friend Kevin went to heaven because he did good things for Jesus, and the good outweighed the bad.
- c. But I want to make sure everyone understands... we can never do enough good things to make ourselves right with God.
- d. In fact, everyone who is here tonight knows that Kevin was far from perfect, even as a Christian man.
 - i. We know he had many faults, just as he could also do good things.
 - ii. The only reason we can be confident that he is now in paradise is because Jesus paid for Kevin's sins and brokenness on the cross.

- iii. Kevin couldn't pay for those sins by doing good works for God, only God can forgive, and He does it completely free of charge... by grace.
- e. You see, God's grace came to Kevin on that fateful day when he wrecked his car, and a voice called him to repent...
 - i. God's grace came to Kevin at his Baptism when water and Word came together to claim him as a child of God.
 - ii. God's grace came to Kevin each time I brought him communion, as the body and blood of Jesus gave him forgiveness.
 - iii. The truth is that wherever Jesus is, there is forgiveness... because that is why He came into this world –
 - 1. He loved us all so much that He was willing to go the way of the cross – dying for our sins and rising again in victory over the grave so we could be forgiven... just like Kevin.
- f. In a most difficult day like this, where we are reminded of Kevin's suffering and death, I pray that we might consider the suffering and death of Jesus so that Kevin lives forever.
- g. The promise is made by God Himself, as Jesus says that He has prepared a place for us – on the bulletin cover it says “mansions” – and I can go along with that... but whatever kind of place we have with the Lord, it will be by His love and forgiveness alone.
 - i. Today, our friend Kevin is completely whole again.
 - ii. He is perfect physically, mentally, and spiritually.
 - iii. He is no longer bound by a body that fails.
 - iv. He no longer resides in a sinful broken world that causes so much pain and suffering.
 - v. No, Kevin is better than he's ever been.
- h. The only thing I can imagine Kevin might want as he gets used to his eternal home is to see each of you again.
 - i. And as you believe that Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life, you will not only see Kevin again, but all those who went before in faith...
 - ii. So believe in Jesus as your Savior, the only way to the Father, and the only way to forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.