

We have gathered here not to stare at death but to gaze at life.

Matt 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

I can think of no tragedy as great as the loss of a child. It is overwhelming.

I watched all of you coming here, and each of you did what I did. There was another flood of hugs and even tears as you gathered.

Most of us stopped and braced ourselves, shook our head, blew our nose, and took a deep breath. Each of us needed to re-group before facing this service. The loss of any loved in is simply awful.

This child was planned for, loved, and cared for these past many months. Nurtured in momma's womb and nurtured in the hearts of many.

So many expectations and anticipations were cherished in the hearts of his parents, grandparents, and friends.

I know children eagerly awaiting the arrival of a new child to play with and imagining all the things they would teach their new brother or sister about Sponge Bob SquarePants and building Lego towers, climbing trees, and playing in the mud.

Our hopes and dreams for an unborn child fill our hearts to overflowing. Yet the hearts that have been overflowing with love, joy, and anticipation, are now overflowing with tears.

It would be irresponsible for me to stand here and tell you that everything is going to be okay, or in any way imply that there is anything good in this. God did not promise that our lives would be easy or free of tragedy.

God promises that we will always have God's love and strength. God's promise in the reading from Matthew is that we can turn our burdens over to Him.

God's promise is that we can grow back stronger and better even when we have seemingly been pruned back to the ground. God's promise is forgiveness and eternal life. But God never promised us a bed of roses in this life.

I take heart from the story of King David's loss of his firstborn. David wailed, fasted, and beseeched God to let his child live. But after the child was dead, David went to the temple to worship God. David washed and ate.

When asked how he could behave like this, he said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." We can have that same confidence born of our faith that we will indeed be with Logan in eternity.

And this precious child will be in your hearts here for the rest of your earthly days.

This child's passing into eternity is not due to any lack of love on your part, and it is not due to any failing on God's part.

Death is simply a tragic part of life that has hit you straight in the heart. The question really is how and where you go from here. Your grief will be with you forever.

For now, your grief surrounds you like a cloud that makes visibility near zero. The cloud will lighten, and you will see through it more and more as time passes, but it will never disappear entirely.

You have been struck with the worst tragedy we can experience in our lives. God knows. God knows because in this season in

which we celebrate God coming to us as a baby in a manger, we know that God knows what it means to lose a beloved child. But today we have a question not of clouds, but of rainbows.

Do you allow this tragedy to immobilize you or to drive a wedge in between you and the ones you love?

Or do you take your tragic experience to God, the great Healer, turning the pain over to Him and allowing His love to bind your hearts back together and forge a stronger link of love with each other?

Today is always the time to tell the ones next to you how much you love them. We never know what the next moment will bring. This is the very moment to reach out and shower your love on each other.

Now is when to cherish each precious second with those you have – giving all the love you have for those you still have can have double. This very moment is the time for mom and dad to tenderly reach out to each other and share each other's pain.

It is a funny thing about us humans that we tend to hold our pain back from others who share in a tragedy with us.

Holding back is something we imagine to be a kindness to others, thinking that we don't want to burden them with more pain than they themselves already feel.

The more you talk with each other and listen to each other, the more you cry on each other's' shoulders and sit together in silence, the more the shared burden lightens the load for both of you.

You all need to hold hands and walk together back through this cloud to the light.

This is a time to start sharing. You are all welcome to say something. Sharing time ...

I want you to think of a butterfly but back when it was just a worm. Then one day, suddenly something begins to happen.

The caterpillar builds a cocoon, then one day emerges out. The caterpillar spreads out two huge colored wings and becomes a beautiful butterfly. It never imagined that this could have happened.

It thought it would remain a caterpillar forever. It flew for the first time. It could see the other caterpillars in the trees, but they couldn't see it.

It realized there was no way it could get back and that they could not recognize such a beautiful creature as ever having been one of them.

Likewise ... this child began to be human, growing as we all did but then, for whatever reason, was transformed into a heavenly spirit.

If you could only see what this child sees, hear what they hear, feel what they feel now in the presence of God. You would in no way ask for them to come back... but you would ask... can I go to be with them.

This precious child's spirit is with God. As David said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

Take what comfort you can that you will be with this child for eternity. And until then, take the love you have for this child and share it with all the rest of us that are still here.

Make your life count.... don't waste it with questions and regrets.

Through Jesus and His wonderful salvation, we can all leave here today with a promise to be reunited one day.

The balloons to be released is our way of saying, OK GOD, we understand that there will come a day that we will all be released back to you...

so we thank you that we have that knowledge, that all who pass from this world simply fly into yours.

We love you Jesus and thank you for the tears, the joys, the laughter, and the knowledge that YOU WILL MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER when we all get to go home to be with you.

### **The Return of the Lord     I Thess. 4:13-18**

**13**But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. **14**For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. **15**For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. **16**For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **17**Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. **18**Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Inv.

Prayer