



104th Michigan District Convention 2025

Memorial Service Message – Rev. Robert Appold

Grace to you and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and from our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Today we remember and we reflect on the ministers of the Gospel who have gone before us, the 62 that are listed in our bulletin for today, who've been called home over the past three years. And we listen to God's Word and we reflect on that. And for some of you, this is entering into a deep spot because it's not just the name of a coworker, it's your mom or maybe your dad, or maybe your spouse or a very loved one or someone you worked with. And it gives us all a chance to reflect upon the meaning and the trajectory of our ministry, of the life we have of following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And to pause for a minute and think about all of that. And to compound the loss of our family members or our loved ones, as alumni of Concordia we know that this may be one of the very last services here in this chapel. And that brings a, evokes a loss of another kind. And so we have a lot of deep feelings. Feelings of grief and feelings of guilt, feelings of frustration and feelings of failure, feelings of bewilderment and bereavement, of loss and loneliness and maybe feelings of release and thanksgiving. And words don't capture everything we feel in our hearts. So sometimes we cry.

Sometimes we need a friend to put their arm around us, a family member to pray with us who participates in those very deep feelings. And we realize that death has come or that we realize that it's following us along every step along the way and will one day call us home. And to say that death is a mystery to us, something we don't understand, does not mean that it is a mystery to God. In fact, he who is the creator of life and the redeemer of life told Mary, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me shall live and never die". And then he asked Martha that very penetrating question: "Do you believe this?" Do you believe this? And that's a great word for you and for me today to say, do we believe this in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Because He has given us His word, His word of triumph, His word of grace, His death and His resurrection, that all who believe in Him will have life. And so today, even with tears, we can say, thanks be to God for 62 who have been called home. Thanks be to God for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for the role that I have in following in their train. And you have in following their train of proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ. And we don't say this is the end, but God says to you and to me: "There is so much more," just as he said to Elijah this morning, as we read. And where we see end, God sees more.

And that's been the convention theme we've had through this first Kings chapter 19 events in the life of Elijah. And we kind of have that bookend of a little sandwich of the events of his life. We're on the, he's on the Mount Carmel and sees the God of great power and the God of great majesty with the flames and the fire that came down upon the mountain. And then this morning, he's in a mountain, another mountain, and a God who reveals Himself in mystery and quietness. But I want to take you to the middle of that sandwich to where Elijah has run away from Jezebel. You remember this story from 1 Kings 19. It reads this way, "But he himself, when a day's journey into the wilderness, he came and he sat down under a broom tree and he asked that he might die saying, it's enough now, oh Lord. Take my life for I'm no better than my fathers." It's a very low moment for Elijah, isn't it? And probably one that you can relate to as well. A moment where it just says, it's all so messed up. It's all so dysfunctional, God. I'm better off dead. I want to give up.

Have you ever had situations like that? I think in ministry, that's one of the best tools of the devil, right? The despair that can come from the grind of every day, every week going through these steps. And you begin to wonder, does it matter? Does it make any difference. But intervenes in only the way God can as he did for Elijah. Because while Elijah says, I've had enough, I see a couple of little interesting things that are going on here. If you

remember the events, Jezebel sent him messengers saying, "You're going to die," right? So Elijah runs away and he stops in the desert, in the wilderness, and he says, "God, I want to die." But he God also sends messengers. Jezebel sends messengers saying, "You'll die." But God sent a different messenger. God sent an angel.

God sent an angel to him in 1 Kings 19, verse five. And we read, "And he laid down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said, 'Arise and eat.' And he looked and behold, there was a at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water sounds pretty good, doesn't it? Maybe, maybe it was sourdough bread, I don't know. And he ate and he drank, and he laid down again. And the angel of the Lord came to him a second time and touched him and said, 'Arise and eat for the journey is too much for you.' And he rose and ate and went in the strength at the of that food 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb, to the mountain of God."

And the angel does the simplest things. The angel just touches him. Touches him. And rather than yelling at him and shaking him up to get him awake, the angel just touches him, gives him some food baked on stone and gives him some water. And Elijah eats and he drinks, and then he goes back to sleep. And the second time the angel touches him again. And the same thing happens. And he is refreshed, and he's renewed and that's what we're talking about here. But it's such a beautiful glimpse of the Gospel of God doing what only God can do. When Elijah can't anymore, God does. And when you can't anymore, God does. What you can't do, God does. He gives *the* Bread of Life, right? The Bread of Life Jesus Christ, who does not sin and who conquered sin and who gives us victory over sin. And he gives us the nourishment to continue in the journey of this life. Christ gave His life for the sake of the people who can't take it anymore. He is the bread of life who is our sustenance, and he strengthens us in our journey. And he gives you the strength to go on that food for where you have to walk through, even through the valley of the shadow of death, even through another day of where God has called you and placed you.

I've never had the angel of the Lord tap me on the shoulder, but I've had people who have tapped me on the shoulder to encourage me, and you probably have too. And I hope I can be that to somebody. I had one, his name was Eldor Bickel. He was a pastor who preceded me in our church at Our Savior in Lansing. And he gave me a book that his brother Kurt wrote about the Franconian immigrants who came to America because that was a heritage we shared. And in the book it talked about our forefathers and our foremothers leaving their home and the difficulties and the trepidation that they felt in their heart, and the reality that they would never return back to their childhood home. And this is what he wrote:

"They were going from houses and homes with beds to the frontier. It must have been a profound emotional experience. At the first of the departures for America, a farewell service was held. They believed that all things were sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. The hymn "Jesus Lead Thou On" was sung. And when the settlers emphasize the line, "Let not faithless fears overtake us," they realize that prayer, and when we commend ourselves to prayer and ourselves to God, we can go where God directs us. And I've often thought about that little beautiful prayer, "Let not faithless fears overtake us today." We're going to use that as our closing hymn and Patrick and Ryan are going to do their musical magic to give us a pause in that service. And I hope you can meditate on that prayer and use that as your prayer, "Let not faithless fears overtake us."

Anxious about your life because it seems to be overwhelmed with so many things and so many duties? Look at the birds of the air, said Jesus, if your Father takes care of them, won't he take care of you? For you are much more valuable than they. Your life isn't as dazzling as what you see on other people's Facebook page or other stories. God can do incredibly more than you can ask or imagine. Are you afraid that you'll be alone? The resurrected Lord said, "Lo, I'm with you always." Aching from the thoughts of death? The gates of hell cannot prevail against God. Can't take it anymore? I'm alone. "Elijah, there's 7,000 still who have not bowed down and kissed the Baal. Today we say thank you to God, thank you for those who have rest from their labors. And I pray that you can be one who can say, thanks be to God for the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Life who strengthens me on my journey. Amen. May the peace of God which surpasses human understanding keep your heart and your mind through faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.