Funeral of Horst Kipnick

August 28, 2012

By Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Grief is a difficult thing to experience; it’s even harder to measure. For those who don’t believe in eternal life, who truly think that death is the end and that is that, then all endings end in grief. The most spectacular and stellar life on earth, the long life, the healthy life, the prosperous life, the heroic life…the happy life in the end, is the empty life for those with no hope.

But from our bible reading, St. Paul has words of hope for us today. As I understand, Horst decided to change his name to Paul for a while when he was in the hospital, maybe a happy coincidence. Because both St. Paul and Horst Paul had hope beyond hope. Grief is a hard thing, and it comes natural to all men; but there’s a difference when it comes to men in Christ. For Christian men (and women of course) St. Paul writes, “**I want you to know, brothers, about those who have died, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.**” And so this morning we grieve for Horst, for our loss of him, for his departure from us to his Father’s heavenly mansion. For Horst’s death, Jesus wept and we grieve, but not as those without hope. That would be so unlike Horst who, throughout his life and even unto the last was a man of perpetual hope, even the hope of everlasting life.

Horst was 19 when he came to Canada, in the hope of starting a new life here. Like many men of his kind and caliber, he loved hunting, fishing, camping, and, as I was to find out through many conversations, gardening. And probably the only hobby he loved more than these things, was talking about these things. Horst was a talker; it came from his good natured character, from being a person who sees in every conversation the hope of friendship, the hope of learning from and about people, and the hope of imparting some of his gardening wisdom to us admittedly less cultivated gardeners.

Horst was a joker, with everyone, even the nurses and caregivers who looked after him this last little while. You’ve gotta have hope to be a joker especially in trying times…to believe that, despite all appearances things are always better than they look. Martin Luther, the conventional namesake of Horst’s faith and mine, once said that ***the best way to drive out the devil, if he won’t surrender to the Word of God, is to make fun of him, cause he can’t stand to be mocked***.

The devil, no doubt, was hard pressed to rob Horst of his hope. He sent to him a trifecta of strokes, paralysis, and finally cancer in a cowardly attempt to get a formerly healthy man to curse his luck and die. And as sure as he’s human, Horst grumbled...but I don’t remember much of that at all. I remember him joking at the devils curses, calling his left arm a “lazy bum,” not whining but wisecracking his way through the cross he was given to bear. I remember him grateful to receive a visit, prayers, and Holy Communion from his Pastor. I remember him grateful for the care he received in the hospital, and the nursing homes. I remember a guy who is so proud of his grandchildren and great grandchildren, showing off in a picture his granddaughters in the wedding dress he bought her; weeping tears of joy at making it to his great-grandson’s baptism even in his feeble condition.

For the last two years, Horst was paralyzed--on the left side I think it was. And for the last two years, the strength of Horst’s hope showed. He hoped with palpable confidence, was sure that he was going to get his limp limbs, his “**lazy bums**,” working again. And just to let you know folks, I was really worried for Horst. Because so often I see it that people put their hope in a cure for their bodies, and when God doesn’t deliver, their hope is crushed.

Horst was confident, sure, *certain* that he was going to walk again, and as the months went by showing little or no progress I was sure, maybe you were too, that I was going to see a breaking point in his hope. That he’d soon realize that his condition wasn’t going to get better and his high hopes would plummet to the depths of despair. Turns out I was the one of little faith.

Some hope that God will cure their bodies if they just *hope* enough; Turns out, Horsts faith was not in getting cured, but in the power of God to do it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Hope is not about getting what you want; it’s about knowing the power of God to deliver all things by his own gracious hand, and when *yours* is paralyzed, you can learn to hope even better.

Christ Jesus, the other much more worthy namesake of Horst’s faith and mine, once had a paralyzed man lying on a mat at his feet. His friends had brought him to Jesus, no doubt knowing of Jesus’ reputation to heal. Well Jesus looks down at the man, this paralyzed man, and says, “**Take heart my son; your sins are forgiven**.” Jesus didn’t heal the man’s body, not just then; only healed his sin!

And we don’t really know how that man felt when he heard those words, “**your sins are forgiven**”…the bible doesn’t say. But you can bet that the look on that man’s face that very moment told the story of where he had placed his hope. If the man deepest wish was only to walk again, then no doubt Jesus words made him look like the Wild Rose Party after Election Day. But if his hope, his deepest wish, his most profound need was to be accepted by His Lord and His God, then Jesus words made his Spirit jump for joy, even while his legs remained lazy bums.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family of your dearly departed, such was the faith, and the hope, and the love of Horst Paul Kipnick. The hope that believes that the one who sets the agenda for life and death and new life, is the one who **died on the cross for our sins and was raised for our justification**. The hope that believes **the Lord is the everlasting God, who does nor faint or grow weary**. The Lord that **gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases hope**. The Lord who gave Horst the hope with which **he has mounted up with wings like eagles, to the place now where he shall run and not be weary; where he shall forever walk and not faint.**