



Light of Christ Anglican Church

The Rev. Mike Moffitt

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Celebration of the Life of James Linwood Sanderlin

*Homily*

Today we have gathered to celebrate the life of James Linwood Sanderlin, but in the midst of grief we are also able to celebrate with joy his going home to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Many of you have known Jim for a long time. So you know that by the world's standards Jim was very successful as an attorney for more than 40 years. I had no way of knowing how he was as a litigator because by the time I first met him he was retired.

One of the first things I noticed was he seemed to me to be one of the calmest and laid-back people that I have known. He was a real gentleman and had the gift of being able to sit and listen, which is an unusual trait. When he did speak what he said let you know that he heard what you were saying.

I'll never forget the day that he came to me and told me he wanted to marry Dixie. I have to admit that it reminded me of the day a young man came to ask me for my daughter's hand in marriage. Of course this was different and yet it felt very important to me because what he was asking is whether or not I would be willing to marry them into the church. When someone asks to be married into the church the first thing I want to know is do they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That's important

because even though they will be making vows to each other, they are also making vows to God and to those within the church. Marriage is holy and sacred, so we treat it like that.

In light of that I asked Jim to tell me about his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To my surprise that part of his story had begun after he came to Light of Christ and met Dixie. They had many long conversations about what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and his decision was actually very recent. He not only listened to Dixie's explanation but did his own research and realized his need for the Savior. As it ended up, I was happy to marry them after hearing his story.

Today, I feel honored to tell that part of Jim's story. Because of his decision to follow the Lord, I can come to you today with gratitude and join with the Psalmist in Psalm 30:11–12. Listen to these words from the Message translation,

*You did it: you changed wild lament into whirling dance;  
You ripped off my black mourning band  
and decked me with wildflowers,  
I'm about to burst with song;  
I can't keep quiet about you.  
God, my God, I can't thank you enough.*

Facing the death of a loved one is always difficult and there is never really a perfect time to say goodbye. Often, in an attempt to make ourselves feel better we encourage ourselves and others by saying things like, "Well she/he has gone to a better place" or "We'll see them again."

There's a question that I want to briefly address. Is it true that we will see our loved ones again? One thing is certain—the day will come when each of us will be the one being memorialized and those who gather together

may be asking themselves, “I wonder where they are? I hope I see them again.”

When we read the [Gospel of John](#) we see that he was very clear concerning the identity of Jesus Christ and His purpose in coming to us as one of us. Right upfront in his gospel John revealed the true identity of our Lord. Listen to John 1:1–3,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.*

In the same chapter the Apostle wrote in John 1:14,

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Earlier we heard read [John 14:1–7](#) where Jesus was comforting his disciples. He told them that he was going away but he would prepare a place for them to join him someday. They were a bit confused and asked how they would be able to follow him if they didn’t know the way. Jesus answered them, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.”*

This was a very bold claim because Jesus made it very clear that he is the only way to the Father. There is no back door, or another way in.

In our Gospel reading this morning we read from John [5:24–29](#), listen again to verses 24 and 28–29,

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment,*

*but has passed from death to life....Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment”.*

The matter of good versus evil comes down to those who embrace the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross for our sins, as opposed to those who reject that sacrifice and claim it to be foolishness.

Those who follow Jesus Christ and live for his glory in this life will experience the ultimate joy of eternal life in the presence of God. For those who follow him reap the benefit of being welcomed into the family of God. Those who reject the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ will face judgment. Jim understood this and even though he didn't want to leave just yet, he longed for the day when he would behold Jesus face to face.

Our separation from loved ones who have died in the faith is temporary, providing we too have put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We will see them again and then there will be no more death or sorrow or pain forever.

The sobering fact before us today is that every one of us will one day be the one being mourned, and it will either be a celebration of life now continued eternally in the presence of God or a tragedy of life now lived in eternal judgment because the offer of God for salvation in Christ alone was rejected.

Sin and judgment are not a popular topic in our culture and those who dare brook the subject are often seen as unloving, narrow-minded bigots. The truth is that not speaking of this truth of Scripture is extremely unloving because it is a matter of eternal life or eternal damnation. We live in a time and among many people who have rejected God and have no idea of a loving creator and because of that, they have no sense of hope

or the truth and meaning of the love of Christ revealed through the cross. Many are seeking to find out the meaning of life and have concluded that life has no real meaning or hope.

I never want to miss a chance of telling the truth of God's love and desire for those who do not know him to come to saving faith through Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian then you must reveal the good news of the gospel to those who struggle with believing. When you introduce anyone to Jesus Christ, he/she introduces that person to their true identity, their true purpose which is to know God and to worship and enjoy him forever. Our creation was not random or without purpose. It was intentional and with great purpose.

The fact is that God through Christ offers us relationship with Him here and now. That is what we were created for and the more we run away from God the more we suffer the consequences of our sin. It leads us to addictions, misery, dissatisfaction with life that ultimately will cause us to continue to pursue things that look promising but once attained bring us no relief. Only Jesus is able to meet the need of our hearts and we can only have Jesus when we are willing to bow our wills to him and in repentance turn to Him for our hope and salvation.

Today we come to say goodbye for now to Jim Sanderlin. He has gone on, but you and I are still here. Where will you spend eternity? Jesus was very clear, he is the only way to the Father, the only way to hope and to salvation, there are no other options, no back door. I know that Jim made his choice to follow the Lord Jesus, and because of that this day of mourning is also a day of celebration for Jim and all those who by faith have turned to Christ.

Let's pray.

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