**Colossians 3:12-17, 23-24 February 12, 2022 (Steve Zupin’s Funeral)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ but especially to you, the family and friends of Steve Zupin,

From Colossians chapter 3, “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.” And from the Gospel of John the 14th chapter, the words of Jesus Christ, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Two things that were very important in the life of Steve, hard work and honesty. Biblical principles, characteristics of honorable men. Steve was an honorable man, he was a devoted husband and father, he was a hard worker who used his hands and made great things, he was a faithful member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Onekama, he served at this church and worked hard for this church.

In our own lives we see the example of Steve’s hard work and dedication and learn from it and live it. We do the best we can and serve others as if serving the Lord. We strive for the same reward and inheritance as Paul goes on to speak about for those who serve the Lord Christ. But this leads us down a difficult road if we were to stop and really think about it. If all there is to life is earning a reward, then you would assume that Steve’s life was easy and that Steve’s story was one where he lived happily ever after. That based upon the faithfulness that Steve showed in service to the church, that based upon his honesty in dealing with others in building for them and working for them, and based upon the way he treated his family and those around him his story would be one of a self-earned salvation, and no hardships at the end of his life. But sadly that’s not the story. Hardships are part of life, even if you work hard, even if you are honest, even if you do the best job you possibly can. Hardships are part of life on account of sin, the corruption of God’s creation, the sin that we are born with and the sin that we ourselves commit every day in what we say, in what we do, in what we even think. Sin corrupts our hard work and instead of doing our best we do the bare minimum. Sin corrupts the concept of being honest in business with being as crafty as everyone else, to withhold information from others to get ahead and calls it good business practice. Sin changes our relationship to God, and sadly the effects of sin can be seen all around us, even when we look at disease. Steve was faithful to God, but he wasn’t immune to the effects of sin and he wasn’t without sin, just like any of us gathered here today. The way to salvation isn’t found with the works of our own hands, or the honesty and morals and ethics that we have. We can’t do it. No matter how good we are or try to be. We need a Savior, someone to show us the way, someone who is the truth, and someone who can give us eternal life.

My dear friends in Christ, this life, ends. It’s a reality we have to face on a day like today where we gather to say goodbye to our dear brother in Christ. This life isn’t what we think it will be, it’s not fair in the way that we feel it should be, and it’s not guaranteed to go the way we want it to. Steve’s life illustrates this truth. I met Steve at the end of 2018, I knew him to be a faithful and kind man. We played dartball together, I gave him Holy Communion, we would sit and talk during the games. But every year I knew him my relationship to him as his pastor changed. His situation changed, you can think of your own relationships and how things changed too. Sin’s effects were shown in Steve’s disease, but he was not without the forgiveness, love, and life that Jesus Christ won for him on the cross by dying in his place.

Sin wears us down, Satan tries to convince us there is no hope and to only give in to despair, to think of Steve’s life as something that happened and now is no more. Sure you can find happiness in remembering the good times and the memories of his personality, of his accomplishments and his faithfulness but that’s all over, he’s gone and we have to move on with our lives. But that’s a life only focused on earthly things. Hear the heavenly truths, and find comfort and peace in the solid and authoritative word of God.

From Job chapter 19, “Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. **And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”**

From Colossians chapter 3, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

And from our Gospel lesson, John chapter 14, “Let not your hearts be troubled, Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. **If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am you may be also.”**

Salvation is found not from the hard work of our own hands, or the faithfulness and honesty that we show living a perfect life. That perfect standard can’t be met by us sinners. Salvation is found only through the work of Jesus Christ, the perfect, sinless, Son of God, the lamb of sacrifice, the one who willingly gave up His life so that we sinners would be forgiven and redeemed, bought back from death and despair, and would be given eternal life in heaven for all eternity. The Holy, Holy, Holy God that we sung about, the Triune God is who Steve knows now in a way that we can’t understand. The very same Jesus Christ who died to save Steve is who Steve sees and knows personally as he worships Him in a joy and peace that we can’t comprehend. That’s where comfort, peace, and even joy can be found on a day such as this, as we remember Steve’s life not in despair and in the past tense, but instead we remember the life that he still has in Christ, the one who saved him from the cloudiness and confusion of a sinful world.

I’d like to close our message today with a verse from 1 Corinthians chapter 13 where Paul writes, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” Again, to speak personally to you, the family and friends of Steve, I met him at the end of 2018. With Covid being a monumental change to the normal way we would talk and communicate with others in Spring 2020 that really only gives me a little over a year to talk with Steve and get to know him. For me, I only got to see the end of his life, I got to see through the mirror dimly or I only got to know him in part because of where he was mentally in 2018. I didn’t get to know the full picture that you did, but what I was blessed to see and experience, was a man who still knew enough about me to ask about my wife and my children. I knew a man who cared enough to sit and talk while we waited for our turn to throw. A man who celebrated the good shots and laughed with the team. I only knew a part of him, but the part I saw was a caring man and a good man and an honorable man.

My dear friends, let not your hearts be troubled, because as Paul describes here, we see only a part now. We know only a part of the glories that await us in heaven with Christ. But don’t cry for Steve, you don’t have to pray for Steve, you don’t have to worry about Steve, you don’t have to wonder if Steve is alright or what’s going on with Steve. Steve knows fully the joy that we see only partly and dimly. Steve is alright, Steve lives on with Christ His Savior and God His Heavenly Father, and the Holy Spirit that guided him in this life that now reveals to him the God who loves him and that he has a full and complete fellowship with. Steve gets to sing “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty” with a glorious company of the faithful. Steve gets to see the Amazing Grace of God firsthand, he sees and understands the full picture. May that be your peace and comfort, as you remember Steve, in the days, the weeks, the months and the years to come. Our sadness is that he is no longer with us, that we continue on in this world of sin, but our strength is that we aren’t alone. You are not alone in your grief and sadness, you are surrounded by fellow friends and family of Steve. You are not alone in your grief and sadness because the same Christ who loved Steve and saved Steve loves and saves you, forgives you, restores you, and reminds you of your salvation, shows you the way, and tells you the truth, and gives you eternal life. God bless and be with you.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.