

**McMackin Memorial – July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**RUNNING TOWARDS DANGER**

***Prayer***

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our rock, and our redeemer.

AMEN

***Death is Due to Sin***

We gather here today because of a death, Rob's death. What caused his death? I'm not a doctor, so I don't know what's listed as the cause of death or what the contributing factors were; I'm a pastor and I know that the ultimate cause of death is sin.

God did not create us to die, but when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, sin, and sin's companion - death - entered our world. As Paul wrote to the church in Rome (Rom 6:32a):

*For the wages of sin is death*

Because of that first sin, our nature is corrupted, and we cannot help but sin, as John wrote in his first letter (1 John 1:8)

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

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Going back to the quote from Paul, note that it doesn't have period at the end of it – it continues as follows (Rom 6:23b):

but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

***The Gift of Eternal Life***

Like the women at the well talking to Jesus, our natural response to an offer of living water or eternal life goes something like this: "So where do I get this gift?"

And the answer is that you and I received it through word and sacrament, just like Rob did.

God called Rob into His family, adopting him as a son through the waters of Baptism. Rob didn't have to do or say anything – it was all God's action in the giving of the gift to an undeserving and spiritually dead person.

We began today's memorial service by making the sign of the cross, in remembrance of our baptism. We should remember our baptism daily, because it's an objective, historical event that we, more than likely,

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didn't have any say in at all! If we focus on God's action upon us, we never have to second-guess ourselves, asking if we are truly a Christian. Again, its not about what we have done or haven't done – in thought, word, or deed; instead, it's all about what God had done for us, on a cross, on a hill, 2,000 years ago.

And God doesn't neglect or abandon His children, even if they aren't as involved with the family – the invisible church – as much as He would like. Christ is faithful and will keep his promises, even when we fall short in thought, word, or deed.

***Vocation***

God has given each of us several vocations. Now this isn't just what we might do for work, but really describes how we relate to others. In the realm of the family, Rob was a son, a husband, a father, and a grandfather. In the civil realm, he served as our country as a soldier and our community as firefighter. I don't believe that God has called us into vocations that we're not suited for, and Rob was well suited for his profession and enjoyed it – it was his dream job.

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And just like Christians throughout history, he served his neighbor and honored God call by running into dangerous situations while others were running out of them. To run away from danger is our natural reaction. Earlier in the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote (Rom 5:7-9):

*For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God*

In serving his community, Rob was reflecting Jesus's willingness to go 'all in' and to put his life at risk, and indeed to die, to save others from the eternal flame and torment of hell.

***Promise and Warning***

Circling back to the text – Today's gospel reading has both a promise and a caution. Jesus promises that the Father has prepared a place for us – and, just like our vocations, it will be well suited to us. We can take comfort knowing that even though we miss Rob, he is enjoying

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fellowship with the Father right now. He loved the outdoors, whether on land, on the sea, or in the air, and there he will enjoy God in a much richer manner than when he was enjoying God's creation here on earth.

The caution is that the relationship has a bottleneck – Christ claims exclusive access to the Father (verse 6):

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

This claim of being the ONLY way to heaven doesn't sit well with our modern American ears, but the text is clear and unambiguous, and we can't pick and choose what is or isn't true or reliable. But praise God that Jesus is very inclusive and that His death on the cross paid for the sins of ALL people of ALL generations – and that includes you and me.

It my prayer for all of us that we receive the gift that Jesus offers, and that we will live with Rob in heaven for all eternity.