



THE CHRISTIAN MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR KERRY TURCK

The Reality Is...

John 14:1-6 (NIV)

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Isaiah 40:1-2, 28-31 (NIV)

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for... ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ³⁰ Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; ³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

John 3:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Dear Family & Friends of Kerry, especially Gary, Julie, and Kathie,

Here's the reality of today: today is hard. Kerry is no longer with us, and that hurts. It doesn't matter how many other loved ones who know have died; it doesn't make today easier because it wasn't ever Kerry until now.

So, we are trying to make sense of our reality, especially because it happened so quickly and so unexpectedly. You may be searching through the fog and haze just to figure out what day it is, how much time has passed. The days seem both shorter and longer. Some of us are still in shock, a bit numb, wondering if this is real, wondering if we are going to randomly see her again at home, at church, at the senior center, just strolling in with her smile and her laugh. Some of us are in problem solving mode, wanting to know the details, wanting to put the pieces together, wanting to figure out how this happened as if knowing the how will change our reality.

Many, if not all of us, are replaying our last interaction with Kerry. We blame ourselves that if only we had known, these are the things that we would have done differently. We would have had a longer conversation. We would have said, "I love you," expressed our appreciation for her. Maybe we have thought that if we did something different we could have saved her.

Here's the reality: you and I, we didn't know that last Wednesday was going to be her last day here on earth nor were we in control of that. Honestly, none of us could have prevented her death. When God decides it's time for us to go, we are going no matter what we could have done to try to prevent it. Because of that reality, none of us are to blame for Kerry's death.

Yet, the reality is that some of us, if not all of us, came here today carrying guilt. We carry the guilt of not always expressing our love and appreciation for people we care about, Kerry included. We have not always been kind to people. In fact, we know and would prefer not to think about the fact that we have been downright mean and dismissive of people. We carry the guilt of not valuing the time that we have had with someone, of not living with the reality that each day might very well be our last.

I think that Kerry knew that some, if not all, of us would be carrying not only heartache but also guilt to her service today. That's why she planned it out that you would hear the words of God telling you specifically, personally, that he "so loved the world" [so loved you, because Kerry would insert her name right there] "that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3:16-17) This was Kerry's faith since she was a child. God sent his Son for you, to take away your sins and all your guilt. Jesus

put your sins, your guilt on his shoulders, his cross. The reality of today is that you don't get to pay for it because God already paid the price. This is what God's love did for you specifically.

Another reality of today is that Jesus loved Kerry and took her to be with him in heaven. He planned this out. So, he knew just the right time to enact the plan. We may not get it. We may still be trying to make sense of it, but God knew what he was doing. This is why he told us, and Kerry wanted to make sure that we knew what she knew, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:1-3) Jesus prepared a place for Kerry. He kept his promise to her so that she did not perish but now is experiencing the absolute marvelous perfection of life forever with God, forever happiness, forever joy, no pain, no sorrow, only peace and security and good health. And she is around many loved ones that she has missed: Gregory, Brian, David, her mom and dad, and so many others – people that Jesus also had a prepared a place in heaven for and taken them there. That's Kerry's reality.

Our reality is that God also so loved you and gave his Son up for you so that you would have the same real eternal life in heaven with him as Kerry does. The reality is that we can get to see Kerry again because God loves us just as much as he loves Kerry. We know this because he gave up his Son for us just as he did for Kerry. He is preparing a place for you and me as well. He really wants to bring us to that same place where Kerry is, to be with her again, to be with him who loves you more than anyone else ever has, more than anyone else ever could.

How do we get to that reality? Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Jesus is that way. He is life, forever life. He's how we get to heaven. He is truth. He is what's real.

Until then, the reality is that we are still here. We still have sadness and grief that Kerry, our loved one, is not with us. How will we go on? We're just going to do the next thing. That might be just to walk over to the fellowship hall and eat a pulled pork sandwich. (Thank you, Wayne.) The next thing might be getting in your car and going home. Then the next thing is to try to rest, some sleep. Then the next thing is to get up the next day.

How will you do the next thing? Only with the strength and care of God, as he said: "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:28-31) Each day when you get up once again, that is God giving you the strength. We will stumble and fall, and God will pick us up. We'll do the next thing only because God gives us the strength. It's what he did for Kerry, and it's what he'll continue to do for us until he soars us on wings like eagles to heaven, to be with him, to be with Kerry.

The reality is that nothing I will say or have said today will change that Kerry's gone. For those who came to comfort and support Kerry's family, recognize that you won't be able to do that either. So, don't offer what you can't give. Offer what you can give. Offer something specific. Offer to be a shoulder to cry on. Offer to pull some weeds or mow a lawn. Offer to make some food. (Apparently, you've already been doing that because Gary should be set on food for quite some time.) Offer to just sit with them, without even a word spoken. Allow them to be sad or happy or mad or confused or numb. It's good just to be there for them.

Gary, Julie, Kathie, people are going to try to say helpful things today and make offers to try and make you feel better. The reality is that they mean well, and they want to take just a piece of your grief and suffering away. Take that for what it is.

Really today is happy-sad. We are happy for Kerry because the reality is that God loves her and has taken her to heaven and that she is happier than she has ever been. We are really sad because we miss her, but God really loves us just as much as he loves Kerry, and he has given his one and only Son for us, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life, just like Kerry. Because Jesus is real and really did these things, we will really get to be both with Jesus and Kerry forever in uninterrupted bliss in heaven. That's the reality of today. Amen.