

***Celebration of the Life of
Mamie Rambin Calmes***

January 19, 2010

I.

Many occasions in life draw us together. Sometimes we gather in joy and celebration, and sometimes in sorrow and grief. Today we're here for both reasons. We're united in sorrow at the death of our friend and sister, Mamie, but we're also here to remember and celebrate her life.

And what a life it was! I just know that at the moment of Mamie's death the angels in heaven sent out the alert; "Get ready, here she comes!"

And to Stan, and Diane, and Bud, and the rest of the family, we want you all to know that our prayers are with you and our hearts go out to you. Mamie was a good Christian woman, a loving wife, a caring mother, a devoted grandmother, and a proud great-grandmother who for many years courageously battled the disease that eventually took her from us. Her passing leaves a large empty space in many lives.

So we sit here today with two kinds of emotions. One is profound sadness because Mamie no longer is with us. But the other is joyful hope because we know she has claimed the promise of eternal life. In that context I would like us to think about how the Lord touched Mamie, and how Mamie in turn touched us. And after I finish, Patti Dicke would like to come forward and share her remembrances of Mamie.

II.

We might begin by recognizing that our passage through this world is relatively brief when we consider the countless generations that have gone before. In the Book of James, our Lord's brother tells us that we "are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (4:14).

Even so, we still live, as Mamie did, to make the world a better place and to leave something behind for those who follow. But we know that this world is not really our home because our lives here merely prepare us for the greater life to come. We just heard some selections from Scripture that proclaimed this Christian promise.

The reading from the Book of Wisdom told us that the righteous live forever, and that God will take care of them. The twenty third psalm said that we "will dwell in the house of the Lord, forever." From Revelation we heard that in the last day everything will be made new. And the Gospel of John told us how Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven.

So, even though we experience physical death in this earthly life, we merely leave this world for the greater glory of eternity. It is not the closing of a door, but rather the opening of the heavenly gate. It's the beginning of the greatest adventure of all, actually returning to God.

And isn't that the core of our faith? Isn't it the meaning of salvation? And isn't it the most magnificent gift that that our Creator ever could have given to us?

III.

But although we know Mamie now has claimed that gift and is with our Lord, we still grieve. We feel a loss because she no longer is with us. We wish we could say thank you one more time for the joy she brought to our lives. She lit up our lives when she was here, and now that she is gone our memories of her seem to shine even brighter in our hearts.

I did not have the privilege of knowing Mamie as long as many of you. But I really didn't have to know her very long to realize that she was an exceptional person. Toward the end of her struggle I had several occasions to visit with Stan and Mamie, and various family members, in the home. And it was clear how much she was loved and how much she meant to everyone.

Stan was especially proud of Mamie's prowess on the golf course. He showed me a room that was filled with awards, trophies and plaques that spoke eloquently of her skill. And I know that if there are golf courses in heaven it's a certainty that Mamie already has a tee time.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that from the moment we are born we are called to run the race of life (12:1). And it's a race where there is no finish line, not in this world at least. Certainly the starting blocks are in this world, and the track is in this world, and we all know that the high hurdles that we must overcome are in this world. But the finish line is in the next world. And when we do reach that line we receive the crown of glory given to those who kept the faith.

Mamie faithfully ran the race, and now she wears that glorious crown. To think about golf once again, she has signed her scorecard and is in the clubhouse.

But as much as Mamie loved golf, she also worked to help others. Her service on the boards of the Mental Health Association and Cancer Society attest to the Christian calling we all have to leave the world a better place. It makes it easy to think of her as a child of God.

And in that sense a good measure of people's lives is what they left behind and how they are remembered. At the visitation last night Mamie's family showed a video tribute to her that touched the hearts of everyone there. It was clear that although Mamie will be laid to rest today, she will be remembered always for her friendship, the joy that radiated from her, her zest for life, and the love she shared with her family and friends.

IV.

We share our tears at parting from Mamie, but we also look forward to the joy of meeting her again. And for Stan and the family, and for all of her friends here today, I pray that your sorrow, and our sorrow, soon can give way to thanksgiving for the wonderful times with her and the memories she left behind.

Light will emerge from darkness. A sense of peace will come. The Lord will be with you and will help you.

And so, we grieve, but we grieve with hope. And with hope the grief we feel today will diminish and be replaced by the comfort of knowing that Mamie is safe with our Lord, and that she is waiting there for us. *Amen.*