Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

October 27, 2018 Ken’s Funeral Message

By Rev. Jim Gardner

THIS IS THE ONE

I confess. I extol heroes. I have to use the word extol instead of worship because I only worship God.

The only catch is that my definition of hero is different from most people. I like sports icons and military experts but my heroes are those people that truly live out God’s will in their everyday lives. People who are hardworking, loving, compassionate role models to their families and communities. People who live each day as if it were their sacred duty to be happy and to share that happiness with everyone they contact.

On the cover of the program is a saying taken from 1st Samuel chapter 16, verse 12. It seems that Saul had fallen out of favor of the Lord because he was too full of himself and less respectful of God. God asked the prophet Samuel to anoint a new king to replace Saul. Samuel was instructed to view the sons of Jesse and God would tell Samuel which to choose. After the first seven sons did not make the grade the youngest, David, was brought from tending the sheep. So, he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes and good looking, and the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is the one.”

Now if the year had been about 1950 or 51, and the Lord was looking for a role model for the Town of Gaines and the County of Orleans, that would stand upright and tall for all his neighbors to emulate. A young man that would be a worthy husband for Ruth, and for whom Ruth would have been a more than worthy wife; If God was looking for such a man, would he not have said, “Arise, anoint Ken; for this is the one!”

OK, I have a flare for the dramatic, but Ken is my kind of hero.

When my wife died someone said at the funeral that they could not say “Jim” without saying “Jim and Wanda” because we were an inseparable unit. This may be true but we paled in comparison to the tower of strength and love that Ken and Ruth provided to everyone that knew them.

Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton sang a song that said “You can’t make new old friends.” This is true for all those people who never met Ken and Ruth. Wanda and I met them one Sunday and following the next Sunday service when I preached they invited us to dinner.

We ate at the kitchen table and talked about the Bills and I don’t know what else. What I do know is that when we left after dinner we both felt like we had just spent time with life long friends, new old friends.

Now we, that is all of us, can no longer touch and listen to these wonderful loved ones. It tears a hole in our hearts, we miss them so much, but isn’t that hurt better than the emptiness that we would have if they had never graced our lives?

A few weeks ago, I had a wonderful experience with Ken on one of my visits. When I arrived, he was wide awake and greeted me by name. He was sharp as a tack and started discussing his day. He told me that Ruth had been working on the house and was beat so she was taking a nap. He told me that he had just put up the horses because they were soaked in the heavy rain. He got them out of their tack and put them up in separate stalls. We carried on a conversation and we were not reminiscing but were engaged in a very real time travel. He went back 70 years and took me with him. Traveling in Ken’s mind beats the heck out of the DeLorean used in BACK TO THE FUTURE. When I needed to leave he said, “Don’t be in a hurry. Ruthie will be up soon and will want to see you.” I told him I had to go, and to give my love to Ruth and that I would see her next time.

God blessed me with this journey.

I am very Christocentric, i.e. my life is totally immersed in the belief and faith in my savior Jesus Christ and the Father, my almighty God.

My mantra is, God’s got this! That is, God is in every good thing that happens to me and God will get me through every bad thing that ever happens to me.

God has put people in my life that will help me and his word to encourage and enrich me.

Now I do not shove my beliefs down anybody’s throat but they work for me so I need to share them for you to use if you so choose.

The 2 scripture readings that started this are strong and beautiful. Jesus says that he will prepare a place for us in Heaven and the Psalm says that we can look to the Lord for a place from which our help will come.

Some other readings go like this:

“And the Lord said, “It is not good that man should be alone.”

So, God created Ken for Ruth and Ruth for Ken.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For you have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

If God be for us, who can be against us.

We love because God first loved us.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus died on the cross so that we ALL may live with him and with each other for ever and ever.

Whoever bows the knee, confesses his sins and accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and savior will inherit the kingdom of God.

All things are possible with God.

God defeated death.

On that day every knee will bow to the name of Jesus Christ, on the earth, and under the earth, and over the earth and we shall all join Jesus in Heaven.

OK, I paraphrased some of those a little bit but the truth is still there.

God is Good All the Time! GOD’S GOT THIS!

Hallelujah and Amen!