

+ In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti + Amen.

Text: John 14:2

Theme: The Stability of His Kingdom

Dear family, friends, and loved ones of Norm; and especially you Barb, present over the live feed but not in person, and also Gary, Cynthia, Trevor, Bradley, and Karen, his children;

The same Lord who said, "*I am the way and the truth and the life,*"¹ promises the faithful that they will be "*receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.*"² Norman Menz has been promised that kingdom- an unshakeable one. What a glaring contrast to the world we observe at the moment! Should we be astonished at how quickly the stability of the world can be capsized? Fear and uncertainty are still hurtling across the global horizon. Disquiet and skepticism about the ability of established authorities to offer viable solutions is on the rise. Where will it all end? God knows, and He will work good through it.

Important blessings will come from the current crisis. The illusion that collectively we can meet any threat facing humanity is being shattered. Life is more vulnerable than many may have thought. We are fragile. We are fallible. God intends that our false hopes will be destroyed. He intends to save us from a false sense of security in worldly things. True stability is trust in God's promise untainted by mixed loyalties. Jesus Christ has overcome the power of sin. He has disarmed the threat of hell. Death has been conquered.

We stand at this graveside resolutely clinging to that truth. No one comes to their grave an architect of their own destiny. Self-definition is all the rage in our modern culture. There are few things our society prizes more than the opportunity to be self-made people. And yes, opportunity is one of the blessings of freedom and prosperity. But spiritually, before the Almighty, in the face of sin, death, and hell, the claim of self-definition is the grandest of illusions. We have nothing that we haven't been given. Norm has been given life in Christ. His race is finished.

But we live on and our needs haven't changed. All of our accomplishments and achievements, everything we are praised and recognized for in this life, all that we have accumulated, everything we take pride in, all of it together set against the wrath of God counts for nothing. They like dust on the scales. We can neither appease nor negotiate with God. He justly demands compensation for our sins. We cannot provide it. In the end we can do nothing but repent, which is not an offering to God, but a yearning to receive. And God does not fail to provide what we lack.

The payment was made. The sacrifice as given. God's wrath was appeased. The Son of God poured out His own blood on the cross. His life was forfeit, crushed by the weight of our sins. Jesus Christ was crucified, but then raised to life on the third day. So, at the end of the day there's only one way to arrive at the eternal day, the day of light, and peace, and joy, the day

never marred by sickness, or sorrow or death. Through the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we are declared righteousness and holy through faith. All who cast themselves on His mercy will never be put to shame. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*³

Norm was baptised in the Methodist church. The importance of that may have been forgotten by Norm for much of his life. But it wasn't forgotten by God. Baptism is God's act of claiming sinners for His kingdom, of promising His faithfulness. It is a new birth into a new family. It includes a promise of a divine inheritance. That inheritance, that family identity can be, and often is rejected after baptism. The allure of worldliness is powerful. Many take the wide road. But rebellion and selfishness don't make God unreliable, they only demonstrate the power of sinfulness.

Norm was led to a more deliberate consideration of his mortality as his health began to fail. God was working covertly and overtly to prepare him for leaving this world. The Shepherd doesn't stop searching for His sheep. He pursues them. He yearns for them. He wants to bring them home. *"In My Father's house,"* He says, *"are many rooms...I am going there to prepare a place for you."*⁴ This He has done for Norm.

Norm was blessed in many ways throughout his life. His life was filled with activity, and family, and love. In their wedding Norm and Barb promised to be faithful to each other 'til death do they part'. They cleaved together, made a life, raised a family, grew old together. They shared joys and sorrows, good times, and heartache. They experienced regrets but shared many other things you would never trade for the world. Their wedding text was from 1 Corinthians 13, we heard it earlier. It's about the supremacy of love. In this life there is never complete purity of love. It is always tainted with selfishness and failure. But there is perfect love and that's what all believers look forward to. There is unending joy. A cross has made it possible.

The parting caused by death has now come. That's true not only for Barb and Norm, for all who loved Norm and will miss him. A loved one cannot be replaced. A Spirit-given peace must fill the void. No one is immune to the pain of separation. Grief favors no one, the prosperous or the downtrodden, the professional or the common laborer, young or old, all are in the same boat. But for Christians grief is not the last word for the Scripture says that believers do not grieve like those who have no hope.

The current circumstances of on-going restrictions have been very stressful for families faced with grief. Customs and conventions of social decorum have been thrown into chaos. Emotions are thrown into turmoil. Difficult and sometimes contentious decisions have to be made. It's all a reminder of how quickly things can change and get beyond our control. It's also a reminder that each day is a gift. It is to be prized, not taken for granted.

Thankfully, dear friends, there will be no social-distancing in heaven. There will be no need. In the presence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, saints and angels, there will be no consequences of sin; only peace, and joy, and light. This life is fragile. But His kingdom is unshakeable. Norm now knows what that means. Thanks be to God!

+ In nomine Jesu +

Christian Burial of Norman John Menz
5 June 2020
Reverend Darrin L. Kohrt

¹ John 14:6

² Hebrews 12:28

³ John 3:16-17

⁴ John 14:2

