

Week Fourteen: The Christian Funeral, Part 3

Opening Prayer – What an amazing gift you give us, Lord, that we can have such comfort, joy, and peace in the midst of such sorrow. Remind us of that joy as we further examine the way in which we gather around your Word at the death of a loved one. When it comes time for us to be brought to you in heaven, grant us the peace that comes from knowing that such a service will point our loved ones to your love and grace found at the cross and empty tomb of Christ. **Amen.**

Last week, we were able to touch on the “Remembrance of Baptism” portion of the funeral service, noting that it is the way by which Christians are connected to Christ in his death and resurrection. From there, the service continues as follows. Again, there are a few responses in this service; I encourage you to join in those responses as we go along.

God’s Comfort

We have come together to seek God’s comfort in our sorrow and to rejoice in the promise of the resurrection. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ who said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

*The wages of sin is death, **but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

*Death has been swallowed up in victory! Thanks be to God! **He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*When Christ, who is our life, appears, **then we also will appear with him in glory.***

Readings

2. There is no magical number of readings for a funeral service. I suggest three, simply because that is what we're used to. But you can have two or four; even one. The readings do not have to be from all the different parts of the Bible, like most Sundays. You can have each reading be from Paul's letters or all Psalms or all words of Jesus from the Gospels. It's up to you. What should you keep in mind, though, as you select readings for a funeral, whether your own or a loved one's?

3. With that, what Bible verses would be especially fitting for a funeral?

Hymn

4. While the hymns are listed in certain spots, we tend to move them around a little bit, depending on the content of the hymn and how it fits in the service. When it comes to choosing hymns, families are sometimes left scratching their heads and default to a small handful of hymns that they know or were favorites of their loved one. *I want to make it clear that there's nothing wrong with Amazing Grace or How Great Thou Art; I enjoy those hymns and they speak well of the reason Christians go to heaven and of heaven itself.* At the same time, there are more hymns than those two at our disposal. Plus, there are a good number of hymns that speak with a bit more theological depth without being too confusing for a newcomer. What are some such hymns that you might suggest to the group? Why that hymn?
 - a. Permit me to add (more than) a few, if they haven't already been mentioned:
 - i. 518 – Christ Be My Leader (3. “death cannot hold me, for he is the life.”)
 - ii. 551-555 Any of the Good Shepherd hymns
 - iii. 563/4 – My Hope is Built on Nothing Less (verse 4)
 - iv. 570 or 573 – God Loved the World So That He Gave/Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness (same tune, similar texts)
 - v. 580 – All I Have is Christ (new to us, but words that point to Jesus)
 - vi. 678 – Once in the Blest Baptismal Waters (the last line stands out)
 - vii. 679 – God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It (4. “Death, you cannot end my gladness...”)
 - viii. 693 – O Gracious Lord, with Love Draw Near (a prayer to encourage the family)
 - ix. 707 – Cling Tightly to the Word of God (an encouragement; “Stay close to God!”)
 - x. 783 – Abide with Me (esp. 6 and 7)
 - xi. 804 – I Am Jesus' Little Lamb (between you and me, this should be in the GS section)
 - xii. 811 – My Faith Looks Up to Thee
 - xiii. 813 – He Will Hold Me Fast (new to us; Christ is the only one who can hold us fast)
 - xiv. 817 – Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart (long, but comprehensive)

Blessing

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Let us go in peace. **Amen.**

Notes - Remembrances, tributes, or the participation of the military may be included after the Blessing at the discretion and with the consent of the minister.

Various customs attend the pouring of ashes or sand over the casket or urn. The minister may make the sign of the cross as he pours ashes or sand over the casket or urn.

11. What comments or questions do you have about the committal service?

Closing Prayer 783 Abide with Me vs. 6-7

**I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.**

**Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
shine in the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me. Amen.**

xv. 819 – If God Himself Be for Me (Romans 8 in hymn form)

xvi. 823 – Jesus, Priceless Treasure (I realize it's in a minor key; the words are too good)

Reminder: we will not have a White class on 02/25 or a Trial of the Grave (see table vs. 5).
xviii. 838 – The Will of God Is Always Best for Me (Grant me to say "Yours will be done")
xix. 839 – Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
to all who are going to see loved ones

xx. 840 – All Men Living Are But Mortal (familiar tune, new words)

xxi. 844/5 – What God Ordains is Always Good

xxii. 847 – Be Still, My Soul

xxiii. 848 – For Me to Live is Jesus

xxiv. 851 – Now Calm Your Heart

xxv. 852 – When Aimless Violence Takes Those We Love (especially good for untimely)

xxvi. 889/890 – Jerusalem the Golden

- b. A question that often comes up in my head, especially with the new hymnal: *Are enough people going to know that hymn? Will they focus on the words?* What are some ways to still highlight some beautiful texts without making people (some of whom may have never sung in a church before) feel left out or awkward, especially as they are in the midst of grief?

Sermon

5. I know I've spoken in past weeks about the funeral sermon and how keeping things simple is often the best way to make sure that people know the truth and comfort of God's promises. "This person was a sinner for whom Jesus died. Because he lives, s/he, too, is living in heaven."

O Lord, support us all day long, till the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

7. What, if anything, stands out from these prayers?

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

Amen.

Hymn

What comments or questions do you have about the funeral service itself?

The following Scripture or another reading is read:

The following is the committal rite. It is a bit different than the red GW rite. I have only used this rite once and that was when there was no public service. So, I printed out the service and made some of the readings responsive (usually, committals are simply read by the pastor from one of his resources). I've indicated those responses below. Again, please join in those.

This service is used at a cemetery, mausoleum, columbarium, or at the place of a funeral service. When all have gathered, the minister says:
Committal

In the presence of the heavenly Father, his gracious will be done. **Amen.**
We commit his remains to the ground/their final resting place—earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust—in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; **may the name of the Lord be praised.**

In the case of a suicide when circumstances make it possible to confess the hope of eternal life, the following statement and prayer replace the statement above:

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will raise with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**

Even when the clouds of affliction and grief seem to hide the face of God from us, we believe that his love remains present and God and his love. Our hearts are heavy as we lay to rest a brother who has walked through dark and mysterious paths beyond of Jesus Christ and the Lord, committed his remains to the final resting place, so that for death, **Those who sleep, with tears will meet with songs of joy.** the Lord has taken his soul to its dwelling place in heaven.

8. Again, the baptismal formula is from the center, as it should be. Notice again that each of these responses are straight from Scripture and, just like the responses in the funeral service, they connect those who have gathered to the hope of the resurrection. By the power of the Spirit lead us each day to find the comfort of the gospel, the insights that end confusion, the confidence to pray, and the certain hope of eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.