

WD February 15, 2021  
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“Somewhere to Start”

I'm going to do things a little bit different today. 2021 has been a quite a year. As I share this with you today we are entering our 7<sup>th</sup> week of 2021 and as of this last Saturday we have had too many funerals, averaging more than one a week—three just last week. Some were unexpected and some were not. In every case most of us were not ready to let any of them go. So, what I'd like to do today is to offer you some guidelines for preplanning for the day that the Lord calls you home. I'd like to give somewhere to start.

Why do this? I realize that this is not an easy topic. Frankly, this is the kind of planning that one would just assume not have to talk about. But when our loved ones are mourning, they are also faced with many quick decisions to be made about what their loved one may have wanted or not wanted. Most families that I minister to at a funeral spend a lot of time guessing what their loved one may have wanted or not wanted for their service. Why do this? For two reasons. First, it takes the guessing out of the planning for those who mourn. Secondly, and most importantly, it gives you one last opportunity to tell your family that you love them and that you are okay because your hope is in Jesus resurrection.

This last weekend was Transfiguration Sunday. In the Gospel of Mark something struck me for the first time. Jesus was preparing the disciples for what was to come in the cross and the resurrection. Mark 9:9-10 <sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.”

We know that at least three times Jesus told the disciples that he would suffer at the hands of the religious leaders, be crucified and then be raised on the third day. The disciples chafed at the idea of Jesus being crucified. Peter even tried taking Jesus aside vowing to prevent it in Matthew 16. It was not something the disciples even wanted to talk about. In the same way no one wants to talk about their own death, even though it is inevitable. But it's not death that Christians think about at funerals. It's the resurrection. And the same was being said to the disciples. But on Good Friday, they were broken hearted and feeling guilty about running away when Jesus needed them most, among other things. And even when Easter morning did come these disciples were still looking for a dead body. It took a week for Thomas to come around. But once they met the resurrected Savior they were preaching Christ crucified because of the resurrection. We too have that same message and reason to tell others about our hope in Jesus. Lord willing when my family attends my funeral, they will think of that resurrection and a chance to be together again so that they might have joy in their mourning.

So, what am I proposing? Well, preplanning your funeral service is in many ways much more important than preplanning with the funeral home. It is at your funeral service that you essentially get to talk to your loved ones one more time.

When I put a funeral service together I always ask for the following things. I ask for a person's information. When were you born? When were you baptized? Married, when and to whom? What are your favorite hymns or songs that you would like sung at your funeral? Perhaps write a sentence why they were your favorites. What are Bible passages that are significant to you and why? I would also encourage you to write up a one-page biography of yourself or even include a letter that could be read to the family. I would encourage picture of

yourself to put on the bulletin. Along with that, it is common to run a picture slide show during visitation. What pictures do you want in there? Perhaps label some of the pictures on the back so those things can be expressed in the slide show. I'm always amazed at the wonderful pictures of those I've only known of older friends, days in their youth, and what they were interested in. You can learn a lot about them in those pictures. For example, I had no idea that Karen Lind was a barrel rider and loved horses. These were great pics and fun to see. Do you want flowers at your service? What kind are your favorites? Mine are sunflowers, for example, because they are bright, big flowers that stand nice and tall--happy flowers. How do you want to be dressed when that day comes? These are some of the things I would encourage you to pass along before the day comes. They are often overwhelming things when in the middle of our mourning and shock.

However, if these things are set to go, then I know that your friends and family will be grateful to have them. The preplanning itself is an act of love. Best of all, remember that all of these things are opportunities to tell you family one more time that you love them and that you are well in the Father's House in heaven. You will be there when they get there.

So, I know that this is a little bit different this morning. But perhaps we hadn't thought about those things before. And you don't have to be older to preplan things. You can do this at any time you feel ready to put this stuff together.

One last thought. Please consider putting this in a file or an envelope where it can be found. It's not much good if you can't find it. The church has a file of some of the folks that have done this. At home its part of our love file which has a step by step process, who to contact, and what to do if something happens to us. Lastly, you may want to put things on a thumb drive too, pictures, letters, etc. so that you can update them once in a while.

At any rate my goal this week is just to put this out there for consideration so that your family has one last chance to know how much you love them and how much Jesus does too. I hope that this helps you.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Matthew Woods  
John 3:30