

Graveside Thanksgiving Service for Rev David Johnston

Monday 7th September 2020



The psalmist writes:

Psalm 62:5 Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him.

6 He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

7 My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

DJ never liked a series, he always loved a text. If we were ever in the middle of a series and I had to be away for a Sunday and David was to take the service, he would always say, 'just you pick it up again when you get back, I've been

thinking about something else.'

So here is my text for today.

We read it in 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 6-8.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day – and not only me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

No doubt David would have preached on this text many times in his ministry with the lovely alliteration that he was a master of. But I am sure that he never preached on it using his own initials DJ for the three points!

So, in tribute to his ministry, here is my effort. No doubt it would make him smile! No doubt with a momentary pause, a laugh, and his wee phrase 'there you are two a penny,' he would have improved on it by giving me his alternative three points!

First of all, we see here Paul's:

1: Defence before the Judge

David Johnston served his master well. His defence before his maker and judge can be like the apostle Paul, one of great confidence, of a life lived for Christ. Lived for the one who loved him and gave himself for him.

David has indeed fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith.

He knew the trials and tribulations of ministry, as well as the joys and celebrations. In his personal walk, as in his daily ministry, he fought and ran and kept.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

For David: **His Faith is now realised.**

Then secondly there was Paul's

2: Dedication to Jesus: David like Paul is promised a crown of righteousness awarded to him, because of this life well lived.

Since the day and hour, he committed his life to the Lord Jesus as a young man, David dedicated that life into the service of God's kingdom.

He poured his time and interest, his compassion and love particularly into the people of the places to which God called him, non-more so, than in his

retirement, when he was called to New Row. That hope, that David has sought to share with others throughout his ministry, that hope **His hope, is now satisfied.**

But even greater here for Paul is thirdly that:

3 Day of anticipated Joy

Jonny McKane reminded me this morning that the last meal we had with David, was not a plate of soup or even that cup of tea with something small to go with it, but the three of us sitting around the Lord's Table in his room in Trinity House.

3 generations of ministry. One about to move to his first charge in Dromore, one whose long and rich ministry we celebrate today and then me the middle, with such admiration for both of them. Maybe we missed the significance of that moment but not the truth that one day we shall sit around the table of Lamb.

*What a day that will be
When my Jesus I shall see
When I look upon his face
The one who saved me by his grace
When he takes me by the hand
And leads me to the Promised Land.
What a day, glorious day, that will be.*

How many times were these lovely words sung at the many missions across this country down the years, that David conducted?

That day of anticipated joy for David himself commenced, last Friday morning as he quietly left this world and those who loved him and began chapter one as CS Lewis says, of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read; which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.

David often quoted at a funeral, part of King George VI's Christmas Speech of 1939.

'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God, that shall be better than light and safer than a known way.'

Today for David, there is no more darkness, no need for light, for in New Jerusalem that Hannah read about in Revelation 21, back in Movilla Gardens 'the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp.

As DJ would have said of others in the past, now we with confidence can confirm that

- **His faith is now realised**
- **His hope is now satisfied**
- **His home is now occupied.**

The Apostle Paul declares: in 1 Corinthians 15 I declare to you, brothers and sisters that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

This is the word of the Lord and he blesses the reading of it to us.

Committal:

Trusting in God's grace and mercy, we now commit David's earthly body to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the sure and certain hope that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish but shall have eternal life. Amen

This is our confession of faith.

**Christ has died, Christ has risen,
Christ will come again.**

Let us pray

Loving God, we praise you that on this day of mourning, and at this time of pain, we can still come with hope in our hearts and thanksgiving on our lips, for we know that what seems like the end with you, is but a new beginning, because Christ has died and Christ has risen.

We praise you that in the Lord Jesus you experienced not just our life but our death, that you endured the darkness of Gethsemane, the agony of the cross, and the finality of the tomb; and you emerged victorious, triumphant over everything that would keep us from you, conquering death itself for Christ has died but also Christ has risen.

We thank you that where the world saw only defeat, you brought victory, that in despair and sorrow you brought joy, that in darkness and doubt, you brought light, that nothing is able to overshadow your love, no power is able to withstand your purpose, because Christ has died, and Christ has risen.

Father God we thank you for the life of David Johnston. For his love for you, for his commitment to your service,
for his faithfulness and love to Carol his wife, his joy and love for his daughters Claire and Jane, his friendship and support to his sons in law Evan and Ken, his pride and delight in his grandchildren Rebekah, Hannah, Sam, Sarah and Grace, his concern and faithfulness to his sister Ruby and the rest of the family.

Thank you for his many qualities that have enriched our lives.

Thank you for the opportunity we have had to be part of his life.

Thank you for the witness he was before us.

Thank you for the fun and laughter he shared together with us.

Loving God, we praise you that we can come today not to close a book but to end a chapter, not to say goodbye but rather to bid farewell for now. In that confidence of faith, we entrust David into your eternal care, knowing that your love for him remains with us now and forevermore.

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy, to the only God our saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore!

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you Claire and Jane and your family and all who mourn this day and for evermore. Amen

Rosie reminded me this morning that she remembers David always said about the Lord, that he is always with us, 'never more than when we need Him most.'

May **His promise support you**, and
His presence surround you and
His power sustain you
this day and forever more.

There you go, there's another 3 point alliteration, as the master craftsman would have said, 'two a penny.'

Thank you to all who have come to share with us here today.