

The Funeral of +William O. Kope+
St. John 14:1-6
July 31st, 2025
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

I Come Again

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sermon Text:

“Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Most Merciful God, Who hast appointed us to endure sufferings and death with our Lord + Jesus Christ before we enter with Him into glory: Grant us grace at all times to submit ourselves to Thy holy will, to continue steadfast in the true faith unto the end, and to find peace and joy in the blessed hope of the resurrection of the dead, and the glory of the world to come; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dearly beloved friends in Christ, let not your hearts be troubled. Our friend and fellow parishioner, Bill Kope, is resting in the bosom of our Father Abraham. His battle in this life with sin is ended. His warfare is accomplished. His iniquities have been pardoned forever. He no longer sits in a strange land beside the rivers of Babylon weeping for his true home in Zion. He is with the One Who has gone to prepare a place for Him among the many mansions of our heavenly Father’s Kingdom. He has washed his robes and entered into the holy city of Jerusalem to partake of the tree of eternal life. In the glorious eternal city there are no dogs, or sorcerers, or fornicators, or murderers, or idolaters, or anyone that loveth and maketh a lie. He is in eternal rest with his Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ.

He now stands among the holy host arrayed in white to live forever and ever, world without end. This is in what we take comfort. This is why our hearts need not be troubled at the death of our friend and fellow parishioner. For, we do not mourn like the world does. The world says, “Sorry for your loss.” We have lost nothing. We have lost no one. A little over two years ago when Bill’s wife, Jo, was called into her eternal rest, people would greet Bill and say those words to him. Bill without skipping a beat said exactly what I am saying now. “I have not lost anything.” He understood quite clearly that this life is only temporary. There is a life to come in which we will live forever if we remain faithful unto death. In his response, I could see the teaching of his former pastor. But more than that, I could see that Bill learned the truths that his pastors over the years have taught him. For the teachings of one’s pastor does one little good, if the person he is teaching does not gladly receive that instruction and take it to heart.

It is for this reason that Bill would not want me talking about him during this sermon. He would

want all thanks and praise to be directed to our Mighty Fortress; to our Lord and God. Lutherans as a rule do not eulogize at a funeral. We preach the Christ, crucified for us. We preach about the eternal realm into which all those who cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus will some day enter. Philip Melanchthon disliked eulogies so much that in his funeral rite he stated there should be no sermon, contrary to what Martin Luther said that no Service should take place without prayer and preaching. Melanchthon did not want a sermon to devolve into a eulogy—a speech that praised the individual who was being memorialized on that day. Melanchthon understood that the Christ is to be preached about. Bill also understood this. One of the purposes of a sermon is to prepare us for heaven; to lead us into heaven.

This is done by pointing us to the Christ. He is the One in Whom we find true comfort and peace. It is through Him alone by which our hearts will not be troubled. For our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, promises to us that He will come to us. Bill looked expectantly for the coming of his Lord and Savior. He would always tell me when I visited him that he was ready to go. He looked forward to the time when he would no longer be in this body of sin, and be free from the agonies of this life. Bill clung with unwavering faith to the promise which we heard our Lord declare in the readings for today, “I will come.” Our Lord promises that He will come. That He will come again.

As we learned in our study of the Book of Revelation, this does not only refer to a future coming. For the word is a durative, that is, a continuing action. It happens throughout the duration of the event. That means that when our Lord promises that He is coming again to us, He promises to always be coming to us. Our Lord + Jesus is continually coming to us throughout our lives from baptism until death. He is continually coming to us in the Word of the Lord God, and in His Blessed Sacraments. In those means of grace He is coming to us continually to call us to Himself. He comes to us to be with us. For He knows how much in this life we are hounded and imprisoned by sin and death. He knows that we are bound in the chains of sin and death, and can in no wise free ourselves from them.

This is why He continues to come to us by His Word and declares to us, “Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me.” Why? Because in His Father’s house are many mansions. He has gone to prepare a place for us, and having prepared a place for us, He declares that He will come again. He comes to us whenever two or three are gathered together in His Name. He comes to us when His Word is preached in its truth and purity. He comes to us when His Sacraments are administered rightly according to His command and institution. He comes to us today with words of comfort in our sorrow. For He has promised not only to come to us and be with us unto the end of the age in the means of grace found in His Church, but He also promises that He will come again to take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in heaven.

That is why we are gathered here today. We are gathered because our Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ, has come and called His servant Bill out of this vale of tears to his eternal home in heaven. Bill has been led into the green pastures of the Kingdom of Heaven. He has been led beside the still waters of the River of Life. There Bill shall eat of the tree of life and never die. He shall live and be without sin forevermore. For while in this life, Bill had been clothed in Holy Baptism with the robe of the righteousness of the Christ. We too are clothed with this robe of righteousness. With this robe of our Holy Baptisms, we can wrap ourselves in Christ’s righteousness. We can take comfort that all of our sins have been covered over by the Blood of our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ.

It was to this truth that William O. “Bill” Kope clung to throughout his life. He was ready to go, he was ready for death, because he firmly believed in heaven. He firmly believed that when he died, he would be with his Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ. Therefore, while we mourn our dearly departed brother in Christ, we do not let our hearts be troubled, for we have lost nothing—we have lost no one—rather we take comfort in the truth that Bill has earned the eternal reward which he sought for so desperately in these last years of his earthly life. He is not dead, but living. He is not gone away forever from us, but is only separated from us for a time. We will be reunited with Bill on the Last Day. There

we will stand with him in that heavenly realm amongst the holy host arrayed in white and wave our palm branches and sing the praise of the Lamb in His Kingdom. The Lamb Who was slain for the sins of the whole world, so that all those who cling to Him in faith may have eternal life with Him in Heaven.

In that eternal city of Jerusalem, we will no longer weep by the river of Babylon longing for our eternal home, like Bill did. There among the heavenly mansions prepared for us by our Lord + Jesus, we will sit down in green pastures, and sing the songs of our eternal home. We will sing eternally about the Lamb in His Kingdom Who offered up His life as a ransom for ours, so that we may be with Him forever in Heaven. There in that glorious land the hosts of Heaven will sing with us, with Bill, and Jo, and all those who have gone before us in the faith. We will sing of what our Lord and Savior, + Jesus, the Christ, has done for us.

He has rescued us from all evil, from the power of the devil. He has freed us from sin and death. The devil and his horde, and all his children, have been dashed upon the stones. They have been destroyed. No longer can they taunt and accuse us. For our Lord has defeated them once and for all upon the tree of the holy cross. He has died for our sins. He was buried in our graves. And on the third day He burst open His grave and all the graves of those who cling to Him faith forever and ever. Death has lost its sting. Death has no more dominion over us. Therefore, when we die, our loved ones have not lost us. We will not be lost but be joined forever to the heavenly host. Bill has joined that heavenly host, and while we will miss him in this life, we look forward to the time when we will see him in heaven again.

Therefore, my dearly beloved friends in Christ, let us like Bill not turn our ears away from the voice of our Shepherd. For our Lord + Jesus tells us that He is coming for us. He is coming to us in His Word and Sacraments. He is coming to us in this place when we gather in His Name. And He will come again to us at the day of our death to take us from this vale of tears to see Bill and all the saints in Heaven, so that we may rejoice and sing with them the eternal songs of Heaven. Marantha! Come, Lord + Jesus! Come quickly and remove our sorrow and pain, that we may rejoice with Thee forever and ever. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord + Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same + Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ + Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!