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FLY YOUR PLANE

My dear friend, Alice Monroe, has a home and a retreat center named “A Wing and a Prayer” in the mountains immediately west of Grand Junction. One of her sons and his wife live next door and watch over her. There she ministers to wounded mothers and fathers who have lost a child, as she did many years ago. Her “ministry” is simply to bring these dear ones into the presence of the Lord who is the only one that can bring them any peace and healing.

Although Alice has never promoted her ministry in any way and does not even have a computer or a website, word has gotten around that “something” can be found there that can help those who are suffering and hopeless. People come from all over the country to visit Alice and to sit in the woods or in the little chapel, or to spend a few days and nights in their RV’s or in the beautiful octagonal cabin that was built for these visitors.

This is to explain that Alice is very busy. Sometimes people call and tell her they are coming, and sometimes they simply show up. And some of these dear folks are hurting so badly that they can’t even talk. And of course Alice knows better than to try to talk to them. The old saying is, “The deeper the pain, the fewer your words.” Think of Job’s friends.

As I think I mentioned before, Alice and I met a few years ago, fell in love and are engaged to be married. I understand that Alice has a priceless ministry - a life-saving station - that has been entrusted to her by God and that comes first. I also still have a few responsibilities. But since we believe in long engagements we are willing to wait no matter how many years it takes for the stars to align.

During the first week of June, Lynn Cumming and I took sandwiches and drove up in the mountains for a wonderful visit with Alice. During the afternoon I asked her if she would share some of her precious memories, and following is one of her

stories that, with her permission, I am pleased to share with you:

A year or so ago, when the COVID situation was wreaking havoc on our economy and social fabric, Alice got a call from a friend in a certain school district asking if she would come and speak an encouraging word to a few of their school counselors and administrators. She didn’t have a clue what she would say to them, but her commitment to God was to respond to any call for help from anyone and to trust God to supply whatever was needed. (What a great philosophy. Stop and think about that.) So she agreed to meet with them.

A few days later she sat down with six ladies. She asked them what was going on and they all burst into tears. The pressure on them was overwhelming. Teachers were suddenly expected to do online teaching to kids, and neither the teachers, parents or kids were prepared for that new experience. Many mothers had to give up their jobs and teach and baby-sit their children. They didn’t understand the new math themselves or many other subjects they were expected to teach. These mothers and fathers were frustrated, angry, and dumping it all on the teachers, school counselors and administrators. The kids, of course, were suffering more than anyone. They felt lonely, isolated and abandoned. They had lost their relationships with teachers and friends at school and many had simply given up and quit trying.

The six women said to Alice, “We don’t know how to help all these dear people, we don’t know what to say to them, and we are all ready to give up and quit our jobs. What shall we do?”

Alice said she prayed. “Lord, I don’t know what to tell these ladies. Help!” She then felt she should tell them a story from her life.

About the year 1980 Alice was working as an RN, her children were grown, and she decided to get a pilot’s license. After she progressed to flying solo, she was given the assignment to fly from Grand Junction to Rock Springs, Wyoming, and

Siam.” And the whole production escalated people’s emotions to a volatile level.

Imagine a wedding where the father of the bride has a new wife; where the mother of the bride has a new husband; and where both mother and step-mother demand to be seated in the honored place reserved for the mother. Or where the father of the bride came to the wedding so drunk he could not stand up and ruined the occasion for everyone. Or where someone - bride or groom, bridesmaids, etc., fainted during the service, or got sick and vomited, or because of anxiety someone on the stage started giggling or crying and couldn’t stop. Or where the groom backed out just before the service, when the church was already full of people, and sent the best man to tell me to break the news to the bride. All these things happened to me during weddings. I tried my best to make weddings low-key and take the pressure out of them, but it didn’t always work. You may be thinking, “Glenn, you’re a Grinch!” Guilty as charged.

Funerals, of course, can also be times of deep emotion, grief and anxiety. Funerals are costly to a pastor in another way. He loves his people and shares their grief with them. Funerals for infants, children, teens, young adults, young marrieds are terribly painful no matter how much faith they have. I still remember funerals like that with great clarity. I also conducted funerals for a number of people who were not believers, not Christians, nor were their families. (I’m simply going by what the families told me; I did not judge those people and don’t really know where they were with God.) I assured those families that God is merciful and told them about Christ and His sacrifice, but those were different, difficult funerals.

But I will admit to you that for me conducting a funeral for a mature Christian man or woman who had lived a long and full life was one of the things I enjoyed most about being a preacher and a pastor. (“Enjoyed” is not the right word, but you understand my point.) Obviously I’m not talking about perfect Christians. There was only one of them and He messed up every funeral He attended including His own. He simply wouldn’t allow people to stay dead.

I’m talking about conducting the funeral of a man or woman who was a true believer and who had lived a full life. a person whose life was obviously transformed because of their faith in Jesus Christ. To preach the funeral of a person like that was deeply fulfilling and satisfying. To visit with

the family and share in their precious memories and their deep conviction that their loved one was in heaven was a high honor, and I am thankful to God that I had that privilege on so many occasions.

All of this is a way of telling you that much to my surprise I was invited to conduct another funeral during the first week of May. My very close friends, Tom and Bonnie Campbell, moved to Georgia a few years ago to be near part of their family, and Bonnie called to tell me that Tom had died unexpectedly and they were having the funeral and interment here in Grand Junction. Tom was one of those men who got things right, and I was so honored to be asked to conduct his service. Following is my message from that day:

FUNERAL MESSAGE FOR TOM CAMPBELL

After hearing Tom’s obituary read, and after hearing the remarks of his grandchildren and his brother, I have to say to Bonnie and all the family that you are so blessed to have had Tom as a part of your lives. You are so blessed to have the kind of memories that you have of Tom.

But no matter how genuinely we can celebrate someone’s life, it is still a very painful thing to lose someone that is such an integral part of our life. It really hurts when someone we love dies. Life is relationships. People we love are a part of us. When they die, it’s as if a part of us dies.

The New Testament basically is the story of a man who lived 2,000 years ago, a man named Jesus. Really, it’s all about him. You know that he gathered a little group of men, his “disciples,” his followers, to be with him for about three and a half years.

Then he got them together in an “Upper Room” to have a final meal together and told them that he was going away (the next day he would be crucified!). He knew they would be shattered. These men had left even their jobs and their families to follow him as their leader, and they had no idea what was coming.

So in John 14, Jesus said to them, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” He says that to you and me today. These are very troubled times. I don’t have to tell you. And then when you lose someone you love it’s like a giant fist hits you in the heart. My sister, Clarice, died last month, so this is a time of personal grief for me also.

What’s going on in your life? I’m sure many of you are troubled today. Jesus says to you and me, “Let not your hearts be troubled.”

Then Jesus says, "Believe in God." That is always good counsel: "Believe in God. But to be honest it is not enough. Standing alone, it is definitely not enough. For the reason that people believe all kinds of things about "God." How many religions are there in the world? And how many different ideas about God? Is God simply a force? Is he or it the universe? Is he or she mankind? Are there many Gods? Is the whole subject a mind game that leaves us free to choose what kind of God we want?"

So Jesus cleared up the confusion. He added, "Believe also in me."

My dear friends, please hear what Jesus said today. He said, "Believe also in me."

(At this point, I produced a large magnifying glass and held it above the Bible.) As we read the Bible and especially the New Testament, and especially Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we see that there is a focus on Jesus Christ. Yes, the Bible is a revelation of God, but it is the God revealed and brought into focus through Jesus Christ.

A few verses farther, one of the disciples, Philip, said, "Jesus, before you leave, please do one thing for us: Show us the Father.....give us a vision, a revelation of God in heaven." And Jesus said, to paraphrase,

"Philip, don't you understand? When you have seen me you have seen the Father! My words are his words. My actions are his actions. My love is his love. The Father and I are one!"

So when we read in the Bible about Jesus' life on earth, we are reading about God on earth. When we see Jesus healing people, treating women with respect, taking little children on his lap, confronting and exposing evil - - - we are seeing God in action.

Believe what the Word of God clearly teaches: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Did you hear? Not whoever believes in God but whoever believes in him, in Jesus.

Your precious husband, father, grandfather, friend, Tom Campbell was such a good man. So steady and kind and dependable. He and Bonnie took care of little children in the church nursery for 20 years while their parents were participating in the church service. They loved it. They loved

those little ones. And Tom did so many other good things during his life.

But that is not why we have confidence that Tom is in heaven right now. When Tom was 60 years old he made a decision. He humbled himself and said, "I'm choosing to believe today that Jesus is who the Bible says he is - - the Son of God - - and he died on the cross for me, to forgive me for my sins and to save me for eternity."

You see, for us Christians, all our eggs are in one basket - faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus did not say, "I am one way among many, I am one aspect of the truth and there are many other paths that lead to God and to eternal life."

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me."

Jesus said, "I am the door, if anyone enters by me, he will be saved."

Jesus said, I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

We Christians are not narrow minded, we simply believe what the Bible clearly says. We don't believe in reincarnation. We don't believe that everyone goes to heaven because that is not what the Bible says. The Apostle John said in 1st John: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

This is a sad occasion, for Tom is not with us anymore. But it's not a tragic occasion because we have confidence that Tom is in heaven with his Lord, and we shall see him again. Amen! This isn't wishful thinking based on mythology. Our hope is based on Tom's faith and our faith in Jesus Christ. Glory to God!

Let's close with a few moments of silent prayer and thanksgiving for Tom's life, and our belief in the amazing God revealed through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
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