

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Memorial for Terry Rooker  
5 July 2011  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Wichita  
Isaiah 40:25-31

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Dear Betty,  
Denise,  
April, Chevy, Shawn,  
family and friends of Terry,  
it's okay to be upset.  
It's okay to feel hurt or confused, or even angry.

As we make our way through this life we try to make sense out of the things we see.  
From the little things, like bandaging a child's "boo-boo",  
to the big things like death—  
we try to come to terms, as best we can, with the question, "Why?"

Why do I suffer?  
Why do I hurt?  
Why do I feel so broken, and confused?  
And today, why did Terry die?

For you, Betty, it may even be more than "why Terry?",  
but "Why Pat, why Vernon, why Terry?"

There are countless things in our lives that don't seem to make any sense.  
Sometimes we know exactly why we suffer,  
and other times it seems so out of the blue.

But, if we were able to take a step back,  
if we were able to see the whole picture,  
to see it from God's perspective,  
it would all make a lot more sense.

Life is a bit like a tapestry, an elegant work of weaving and stitching.

On one side of this tapestry is a beautiful picture—  
the colors are vivid and distinct,  
the portrait is clear and engaging,  
the whole thing just makes sense—  
and there's great beauty in what it means.

But on the other side, looking at a tapestry from behind,  
all we see are knots and loose-ends,  
cut strings and random pieces of tape here and there.  
On this back side there's no beauty—  
at least not that we can see.

*This beautiful tapestry is the life of a Christian.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ weaves together our many experiences and encounters,  
 our joys, sorrows, work, family, play, and faith,  
 into a beautiful tapestry.

He's got it all just the way He wants it;  
 and as He promises us in St. Paul's letter to the Romans,  
 "We know that for those who love God *all things* work together for good"  
 (Rom 8:28).

*All things*—  
 stubbed toes, lost jobs, broken families, illness, pain, and death—  
*all things* work together for the good of those who love God.

So while we spend our lives looking at this backside,  
 looking at the knots and the loose-ends,  
 the masking tape and the disorder,  
 we trust His promise of a beautiful tapestry,  
 a *good* work of art.

And this beautiful tapestry,  
 this good work of art,  
 was made out of Terry long ago at his Baptism.

*Baptism, too, is like a tapestry.*

While we see very simple water poured onto the child's head, with very simple words,  
 "I baptize you into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"—  
 there is, nevertheless, a work of great beauty being performed!

We see the simple, the almost meaningless,  
 and God sees the reality:  
 He sees the cross of His Son being put onto this new Christian.  
 He sees the forgiveness of sins for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ.  
 He sees life, salvation, a cleansing and re-birth from above!

God sees the whole picture, the beautiful tapestry, the *good* work of art—  
 we see the backside:  
 just another wet baby.

Terry also was a wet baby—a baptized baby.  
 He too had this simple water and simple word put on him from a very early age.

And while we might not see that as such a big deal—  
 that's only because we see it from the backside.

But from the front, from God's perspective, and in God's own word,  
there are great promises attached to this Baptism.

Even if we knew nothing else about Terry's life,  
we know that he is baptized.

And what that means is that the Lord said,  
"You, Terry, are my own.  
You are my dear child, my Son.  
All that I have is yours, and all of yours is mine."

It's this baptism that gives us Christians great comfort.  
It's baptism where we see God at work *for us!*  
It's baptism we can run to,  
for certainty in our doubts,  
for comfort in our fear,  
for clarity in our confusion.

In baptism, God comes to heal and forgive and save.

This is our comfort in Terry's being called home.  
This is the clear word of God that encourages us to trust in Him—  
to trust even while we ask, "Why?"  
This is how our Lord sustains us throughout the wearisome changes of this life.

As the reading from Isaiah says, this is how, "**The Lord shall renew our strength,**"  
how, "**we shall mount up with wings like eagles,**"  
how, "**we shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint**" (Isa 40:30-31).  
It all comes from our Baptism!

Baptism is that clear word of God that says,  
"I love you.  
I've given My Son to die for you,  
in your place,  
so that you would live,  
and become a beautiful tapestry, a *good* work of art."

In our suffering,  
and when we see only the pains and the misery before us,  
we're looking at the backside.

But even in the midst of these pains, and setbacks, and sorrows, and deaths,  
the Lord God works for your *good*—  
for the good of those who are baptized.

And just like Terry, He has in mind to weave your life into a beautiful tapestry.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*