

Kent Eloie Eulogy

02/21/2009

The shadows had been long, and it was brisk, cold. "Mike! Mike!" he whispered as we sat in the deer blind. A beautiful mulie buck had topped the crest of the hill between the draws, and he was on the move in our direction as he crossed the hay field. My friend had brought me to hallowed ground, a place he cared about, and shared two of his most intimate gifts with me - his family and their Nebraska farm. I really felt loved that day. And that deer was tasty.

Kent and I have spent a lot of time together as friends, and I suppose I could enumerate our friendship as the times we've shared. I will always remember our experiences with love and happiness. And as I consider how to eulogize Kent through our friendship, you need to know the basis of our relationship was not just our activities and time together, but more so our mutual love and pursuit of our Lord. Our friendship endured as the result of pursuing God together, not the other way around. I'd like to tell you about Kent's walk with Jesus.

Nobody begins life in sync with God's expectations. In the last years of his life here, Kent grew to bring himself increasingly under God's Word, and as a result, those of us who know him have judged him to have lived a good life as a servant of Jesus. When we recognize and strive to change and to live according to what is right in God's eyes, the result must be a life well ordered and one bearing good fruit. I believe Kent understood this, and in his pursuit of Jesus, he became an excellent and useful man.

I often explain to my own children that the world is in sore need of useful men and women of God, and Linda and I encourage them to continue to grow into their role. Kent has been one of the people we can point to as an example of what that can look like.

The person of Kent who left us to be with the Lord is not the same person I first met 10 years ago. I dare not say this to point out his faults, because who of us under conscription to Jesus hasn't improved as a person compared to when we first found Salvation in our Lord? What I want to point out is that Kent began to follow Jesus, and he ultimately died a fine Christian man. However, he did not achieve this on his own volition, but through his willful cooperation in Jesus' Sanctification of his life. I believe it is right to look to the many results of Kent's life. But more so, we must acknowledge God's willful shaping of him and his circumstances so that he, and more importantly Jesus, are given recognition for their contributions. Kent is a most notable person, who was made so in cooperation with the work of a most exemplary and merciful God.

My relationship with Kent truly began almost 4 years ago. When God reintroduced us, we were both quite different than we were 7 years before. We had no idea where God was about to take us, but as for me, I believed Kent was a quality person with whom I wanted to forge a closer relationship. In our first year we chose to go deeper into each other's lives, and in turn, our love and appreciation for each other also grew, as did our growing sense of brotherhood in the Lord. One year later, to the day, God would begin to reveal the sad news of Kent's disease.

Kent is a caring, thoughtful, and sacrificing friend. On Memorial Day weekend 2006 Kent began to understand he had a problem. We spent a long weekend of shooting, worshiping, and fishing. All the while, he chose not to tell me so as not to upset our time together. He put me before his own needs, in a time when he felt scared and vulnerable. Later in our relationship he would invite my family to join his, as he offered his family as a surrogate to ours. Kent and Bridgett's families would show us much needed love, and embrace us. Finally, Kent and Bridgett allowed Linda and me to walk with them as they faced his cancer. Kent shared the best of what he had to offer me - he offered his friendship, his family, his hurt, and his heart.

I believe that weekend was the beginning of our realization that God had brought together two friends of like mind in God's purpose, two men who at least wanted to frame our perceptions in agreement with God's perspective. I believe we began to

realize we were as Prov. 17.17 states: ‘...Friends who would love at all times, and brothers born for adversity.’ We knew this would be difficult, yet we had faith that in cooperating with God’s Word we were sure of our task, that it would surely bear fruit through the Grace of God Himself. From that point on, though we didn’t know what would lie ahead, we were assured of our Lord’s call to His expectations. We understood the work at hand, and we chose to pursue it.

This isn’t what either of us wanted, in our own desires. We wanted a long life together as friends, and we had only begun enjoying the sweet fellowship of two men who love each other as brothers. However, through all of this, we both strived to check our desires against our Lord’s commands. The rest of Kent’s life would flourish as a result to his surrender.

Looking back, I now see that Kent had an appointment to die. I now see that Father would ultimately allow Kent’s disease to take him away. However, most important from my perspective, have been the manifold intercessions and blessings of God that would show over and over that Father is merciful to us as he eased us to the appointed conclusion at Kent’s death bed. I believe many of us understand the work at hand is not yet finished, and we shall still choose to pursue it.

Jesus has repeatedly shown Himself through the loving and obedient intercessions of people of faith who, in belonging to Him, have demonstrated Jesus’ love through their service to Kent and his family. Many people, children of God through Salvation in Jesus, have been His hands and feet. Many people have shown the benefit of Jesus in them as they have been known by the love they have displayed. To these people, may the Lord say “Well Done!”

I have observed others who have faced devastating news, or the hardship of a terminal disease. In these times I believe it is easy to withdraw into self-focused despair and bitterness. We are only human. I believe it is easy to circle the wagons and fight for the desires of self. Again, we are only human. Yet in this, I witnessed Kent and Bridgett’s willingness to deny themselves and surrender to others that everyone might help them and thus serve the Lord. It is not easy allowing others to

see your need, to know your weaknesses, to let others participate in your pain. However, in recognizing this as an opportunity to allow people to serve, they allowed Jesus to glorify Father as His disciples carried out His Work. In understanding and cooperating with God, Kent and his family have been benefactors of Jesus' glorifying Work.

For the sake of Christ, we have seen many, many acts of service and love to the Eloes. These things do not happen by chance. These things do not persist solely by the efforts of determined men. These things happen through the intent and willful volition of a transcendent God, through the submission and obedience of God's people in Christ.

Kent has been a good example to look up to. That means he is also a good example to follow in our own walk. I'd suggest it would be wrong to only admire Kent. Do these words and this day touch your heart? Then let us fear God's Word. Let us follow and serve and love Jesus. Let us purposely forge friendships and give ourselves to those people. Let us be known by the love we show each other. I believe Father's lesson for us is that we should strive to follow Jesus as Kent did. We should watch people like Kent and learn how to run the race.

I have witnessed others, suffering from terminal disease, dying without the accompaniment of these Works of God. I have seen others suffering by themselves, without any idea what to do, without anybody around them when they die, without embracing God's Will or having His people to help them.

In Kent and Bridgett's case, I have seen the total opposite. Kent has left us, but we know he now lives with our loving Lord. We have witnessed a useful man, dying well, as he strove to cooperate with God and see Him glorified. We have seen the benefits of a loving Savior through Kent and the many others who lived out the Spirit of Christ, as He compelled them. Do you like Kent? Do you admire him? Then follow his example and pursue Jesus, surrender to Him, acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior. Order your life according to His expectations and enjoy the benefits of being a child of God.

We began this journey almost 3 years ago, bracing for impact. But in the end, all of us - Kent and those in the midst of Christ's Work - have been shuttled to this day by

a gentle, and compassionate, Savior.

We praise You, Jesus! We worship You, our God!