

## Let's Go Deeper...

### Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Let's go deeper into the realm of grief and what to say in the midst of tragedy as inspired by Rev. Elizabeth King's ministry last weekend.

We had three funerals last week: Ted Crutcher, Ted Bates Sr, and Lindsey Roberts. With three the previous week (Bill Embry, Sid Cranfill, and Virginia Browning) and two more deaths made known to us last Friday, that makes eight losses in our church family in fourteen days. Ted Bates, Bill, and Virginia were all in their nineties. Sid, and Ted Crutcher lived into their eighties. Lindsey was 36.

Lindsey's mother, Patti Elam, and her stepfather, Jim Elam, are 8:30 service regulars. Deacons, they prepare and serve communion and receive our offerings on a regular basis. Lindsey, as Patti and Jim shared and her friends and extended family knew, battled her share of demons. She knew the bondage of addiction. But that is not what claimed her life. Rather, she died in her sleep from a previously unknown heart ailment. This time last winter, a 30-something-year-old pastor I mentored in the Bethany Fellows died in a similar fashion. Lindsey left behind a fiancée. Brian left behind his wife who was seven months pregnant with their first child.

What does one say at the funeral of a 36-year-old?

Elizabeth began Saturday's service for Lindsey with the words of Ecclesiastes:

*To everything there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*

*A time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*

*A time to kill, and a time to heal;  
a time to break down, and a time to build up;*

*A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*

*A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*

*A time to get, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;*

*A time to rend, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*

*A time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time of war, and a time of peace.*



Then Elizabeth said:

Lindsey Scott Roberts lived these times. She laughed and cried, mourned and played. She knew a little bit of peace and a lot of war. She knew love and loss. But this time has come too soon. This is a time of celebration and sorrow. We will wonder “Why?” and “Why now?” but this time has come without answers or justification.

So as we gather here to commemorate Lindsey’s life, we bear a complexity of emotions. We will remember with joy the compassion with which she reached out to help others...and we will feel pain with the sense of finality that we will not see this beautiful child of God come into her full self in this life. We are sad and numb and thankful.

Let the scripture assure you there is a time for all these things...and as you share memories of Lindsey, let there be room for both laughter and tears, anger and joy, regret and hope. And, above all, celebrate that we gather not only with a sense of loss, but with hope that the one who made us does not leave us in the dust but in Christ gives us the victory of eternal life in the love of God

Elizabeth’s words were honest, accurate, and true. Achingly true. There was no attempt at glossing over the reality of the tragedy. Nor did she waste words on vapid clichés. Rather, she couched her words in God’s Word, named our pain and placed it within God’s promises, and thereby set us in a place where we could sing and pray and remember ... and hope. I left that service different than I arrived. Words prayerfully pondered and carefully written and eloquently, carefully spoken, human words informed by God’s Word can do that. It happened Saturday. Elizabeth made it happen.

On Sunday morning, Elizabeth preached on **the gifts of the Holy Spirit** as addressed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. I’m not sure which spiritual gift mix it is that enables one in the face of tragedy to speak the right and needed words to persons grieving the death of loved ones, but I’m pretty sure my colleague Elizabeth has it.



**This Sunday...** I’ll be preaching from Luke 9:28-36 on Transfiguration Sunday. James Trader, Curator of the Cane Ridge Meetinghouse where Central was born in August, 1801, will be our guest for a joint 9:30 a.m. Sunday school hour in the Fellowship Hall -- David