

Death teaches lessons, pastor tells mourners

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Here is the text of the funeral sermon for Bruce H. Ditlow delivered Wednesday at First United Methodist Church, Millersville, by the Rev. Richard W. Connor:

We are gathered here this afternoon because death has spoken; fragile human beings as we are, death has torn apart the very lives of this family. Death has taken Bruce Ditlow from our midst.

There has been a lot of activity and busyness since Saturday evening. You can watch the funeral on the six o'clock news. Yet, I hope that none of this activity will distract from realizing that this afternoon we go to a cemetery, after which life will attempt to grind back to normal. Yet, for this family, life will never be the same. Bruce Ditlow is dead.

His death has taught us some valuable lessons: first of all, Bruce's sudden death is a reminder that the gift of life, this gift that God has given to us, is very fragile. Bruce being a paramedic, all those who work in emergency services know that life and death are separated by only a thin, fragile thread, a thread that can be broken at any moment, at any age, time or place!

Secondly, because life is so fragile, because death can come without warning, we dare not take life for granted. No one here should live life expecting that someone you have, I have, some kind of right to be alive at the same hour tomorrow.

No, the thin thread of life is such a precious gift that as we love those around us, we do so with enthusiasm in gratefulness to God....."Thank you Lord that I am alive another day. Lord what would you have me do with this day?"

Those who like Bruce, Kevin, and Jeffrey, all who work in emergency services; doctors, nurses, ambulance---rescue personnel, firemen, police realize that the very next call for help can be the last. Bruce and his comrades in death set the example. There can be no hesitation.

You can stand before the opening of the septic tank and say to yourself "I wonder if I am going to get killed going in there to rescue a little boy?" Kevin did not say to himself "I wonder if I'm going to die trying to save Bruce?" Jeffrey was willing to give up his life as well.

All these young men, so young, with so much life ahead of them? Yet such questions cannot be asked. Even though life is held together by this fragile thread, these men were willing to give it up, an example for everyone in that profession to follow.

Then finally, Bruce's death reminds us how important God is, a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and then living life in obedience to God's will. God gives us life. We do not somehow create life ourselves. God surrounds life with a mystery of death, that as long as we live, God gives us the example of Jesus to follow, that of loving and serving others.

All hospitals carry on the work of Christ's healing ministry, but St. Joseph's being a Christian hospital goes one step further. St. Joseph's hospital is the very body of Christ, actively following

His commandment to love.

Like Bruce and Kevin, those of you who work at this hospital are more than just doctors, nurses, emergency personnel or whatever your service is. You are the very example of what Jesus teaches about life, the sharing of the gifts of compassion and healing in the Lord's name; and in the Lord's name", we have the promise: he who loses his life for my name will find it."

Bruce and Kevin and Jeffrey were led by God to heal, to rescue, and because of this tragedy to die. They join a long line of martyrs and saints who followed Jesus. To name the name of Jesus means that we are willing to give up life so others may live. Amen

This article was reproduced June 13, 2011 by LT. Greg Leaman of the Lancaster Township Fire Department on the 30th anniversary of the Line Of Duty Death of Bausman Firefighter Jeffery W. Jones.

LTFD.org



A memorial brick was placed at the Lancaster County Public Safety Center Memorial Park on the 30th Anniversary of the line of duty death of Bausman firefighter Jeffery Jones.

St. Joseph's Paramedics Bruce Ditlow and Kevin Weatherlow also died in an attempt to save an 8 year old boy.



BAUSMAN
STATION 6-1

WHEATLAND
STATION 6-9



JEFFREY W. JONES
JUNE 13, 1981
"LEST WE FORGET"

HE GAVE HIS LIFE SO ANOTHER MAY LIVE