

Suicide Remarks by Tony Cooke

Note from Tony: Conducting a funeral for someone who has taken his or her own life can be one of the most challenging tasks for a minister, and yet it provides an opportunity to speak words of comfort and encouragement to a family and friends who are in great pain and distress. The following may or may not be appropriate in every situation. The best funeral messages will come after speaking to the family, hearing their heart, and learning all that you can about the deceased and about their perspective of the situation. Of course, we always look to the Word of God as our ultimate source of information and inspiration, but listening carefully and sensitively to the family and finding out what is comforting to them is of utmost importance.

PRECEDE MESSAGE WITH PERSONAL REMARKS.

To say that these have been very difficult days for _____'s loved ones would not begin to touch the magnitude of what they have felt and experienced, but in the midst of the present turmoil and distress, I want us all to be reminded of God's goodness and mercy, and the comfort and strength which I know is available to us here today.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

It is not my intention today to be eloquent, to become philosophical or to speak forth lofty platitudes, but to simply focus on God's love and compassion, and to share the simple truth of God's care for each one of us.

As I considered some of the things I shared about _____ earlier – his love for Jesus, his desire to see other people know him – I remembered the words of Jesus who said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." _____ exhibited that hunger and that thirst and I am so thankful for Jesus' promise that he would not leave the desire of our heart unsatisfied.

I was also reminded of a statement that Jesus made in John 6:37 where he said "Whoever comes to me I will never cast him out." It gives me great joy to be able to remind the family this day that _____ did, in fact, during his life come to the Lord Jesus seeking his mercy and forgiveness for his life, and I am so thankful for Jesus' very plain and simple promise that whoever came to him, he would not turn him away or cast him out.

The issue of an individual taking his own life is very difficult from many perspectives. Words cannot describe the shock, the dismay, the pain, and the struggles which face a family when one of their loved ones has died at his own hand. Not only is this type of thing something which is emotionally devastating to the family left behind, but it often raises very perplexing spiritual questions as well.

I feel it is of utmost importance that we recognize there are situations where a person succumbs to internal pressures and problems that we know little of. Depression, despair, despondency can at times cause a person, as we might say, to not be himself – to do things he would not otherwise do if he were thinking clearly and rationally.

Rev. Kenneth Hagin said that a person can be sick physically and act in ways he would not normally act and to do things he would not normally do. Likewise, a person can have a sickness which affects his thinking and emotions, and he may act in ways and do things he would not otherwise do.

Though we still feel the loss of the person we knew, there is a tremendous amount of comfort from the Scriptures because we are clearly taught from the Bible that God's mercy, compassion, and understanding are very great. We see God's love demonstrated in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This is a statement that is full of God's grace and God's mercy and we see in this statement the glorious fact that God takes our knowledge and awareness of reality into account when He looks at our lives.

In the light of this, I want to encourage the family today, that even though you might feel sorrow very deeply and shed several tears, I remind you and encourage you to look to the precious promises of God that I believe will bring you comfort.

What lies before us this day in this casket is not _____, but rather the body in which _____ lived. The Bible teaches very clearly that when a person who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ leaves this earth his spirit goes to heaven and is very much alive and conscious in the presence of God and in the presence of Jesus.

Revelation 21:4, 5 says:

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said," Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

Actually, the tears that are shed today are shed more for ourselves than they are for _____. Though his death grieves us, the place to which he has gone is far superior to this earthly life that we know.

Paul stated that "To depart and be with Christ is far better." (Philippians 1:23) He also stated in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." This is our hope and this is our source of strength during this time.