

As follows in Jesus' name:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. ^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear fellow redeemed, especially you Kyle and Corey, Shirley & Kent,
If I were to say that Kelly was a hard man, would you agree with me?
Or would you say that he was more of a tender man?
Or would you say that he was both... at the same time.

We get a glimpse of this already in his youth.

He was not a boy who excelled in book-learning, like history, reading, and grammar.

Kelly was a hands-on kind of guy... Shop class was more his speed.

He liked to work with his hands, and that was true throughout his life.

Shirley, I am told that when he was a young man, you would volunteer his help to those who needed it.

No doubt this helped to shape a heart of care and concern for people,
and a lifetime of helping other with the gifts he had been given.

In his youth, he enjoyed playing with the neighborhood kids in the great outdoors,
forming strong bonds that have lasted an earthly lifetime.

You can bet there was a little bit of getting into mischief here and there with those same friends.

I am told that he had a harder life in his youth.

When he grew, Kelly showed himself to be a hard/strong man. He enjoyed hard work.

When he was old enough, he joined the US Army and was stationed in Germany for a time.

That's not something you do when you want to live in comfort and ease.

I'm told that when he got there, he didn't know a lick of German,

but he quickly found a reason too when he met Iris.

They got married and then moved stateside for a bit while he was still in the Army,

but when he was discharged, they went back to Germany to work for the military as a civilian.

They lived there for 14 years, being near her family, traveling and making friends.

He picked up the language, but you can bet it wasn't by studying it from a book, likely a tavern.

Wasn't it his love for people that drove him to learn the language,

wanting to talk with them, understand them, help them?

Kelly was still the same Kelly, forming bonds with people that he would have for the rest of his life.

...

By trade, Kelly was a heavy equipment mechanic.

That's hard work. And it took its toll on his body.

Finally he had to retire a little earlier than he planned because of an injury that needed an operation.

But Kelly wasn't only a mechanic, he was a handyman, a jack of all trades.

He spent months over in Germany helping his father-in-law renovate his house,

helped his boys work on their various projects,
took a turn as a trustee around here, fixing pipes and other odds and ends,
not to mention whatever neighbors or friends needed.

...

But just as hard as he worked, so he also played.

Hiking, skiing, learning to snowboard as an adult...

His body showed the signs of his hard life:

rotator cuff surgeries, hernias, 4-5 fused vertebrae, and more.

He lived hard.

And yet, this hard strong man, as you well know and,

as all the pictures you will get to see at the reception in the narthex afterward will show,

he also had a tender spot for people... He loved people... to help and take care of people.

He loved his wife, Iris... It was devastating when the Lord took her home so quickly last year in January.

He loved his mom and father-in-law and showed it by his presence with them and the help he gave.

He loved you, Kyle and Corey, and your families.

You know that if you asked him to do something that he could, he would do it...

watching his grandkids, helping repair or fix something, or just talk... he would do it.

And he loved his Lord. Kelly was thankful for the gifts God had given him in this life.

But that isn't why we are gathered here today.

We are gathered here, because Jesus loved Kelly.

It can be tempting to think that God called Kelly into His family because of Kelly's big heart.

But Kelly knew that this wasn't true, Kelly knew what was in his heart.

It was sin, which produced guilt. And he knew that the wages of sin is death.

Our text is very clear about why we can joyfully join together here today, even as we mourn;

it is by grace that Kelly was saved through faith. It was not his own doing.

His faith was a gift of God, not a result of his works, even of his many charitable works.

And Kelly didn't **boast** in them.

As much as Kelly was a craftsman, **he himself was the workmanship** of a master craftsman,

created in Christ Jesus for good works.

While many of us will remember Kelly best for who he was in the latter part of his life,

this was a much refined workmanship than what the Lord had started with.

As much of a good guy as Kelly was, he was not proud of everything that he did.

Circumstances in life were not always easy and some of those had a pretty negative affect on him.

Even so, he realized that he needed to get help to work through some issues.

While counseling is useful for the mental work, Kelly recognized he needed something more.

He did not just need to learn how to change his thinking,

he needed to be cleansed and forgiven. He needed a clean conscience before God.

He needed to know that he could not make up for his sins,

but that he had already been **redeemed... with the precious blood of Christ,**

as a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19

He needed God's grace, and the gift of faith to believe that Jesus had won his salvation for him.

It was not until he was 45 that Kelly was baptized into Christ.

Parkland had started a south mission and Iris and Kelly were looking for a school for Kyle and Corey. Kelly and Iris, took instruction and learned of God's grace more deeply.

Years of guilt were washed away as Kelly received his Lord in Holy Baptism.

The Lord used those hard years in his youth to shape him to be the man that he was,
and moved him to seek God's grace and forgiveness in His Son.

Romans 8:1

& Kelly found relief, knowing "**There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.**"

This was not a thing earned by his charitable works, it was a grace given.

And that was not lost on Kelly and Iris.

They appreciated the church and school where their family's faith was strengthened
and where they regularly received Christ's forgiveness, announced each week in the Divine Service.

They participated in knocking on doors,

desiring that others would also get to receive and benefit from their Savior's gifts, just as they had.

They spent time encouraging and helping around the church and school,

freely supporting the work of the Gospel,

not out of guilt, or as an effort to make up for sin, as if they owed God... but out of thankfulness.

Kelly's heart that had been shaped to care and have concern for people, simply got bigger.

And the bonds that he sought to make,

he hoped would last, not just this lifetime, but also into eternity.

...

But we are gathered here because the Lord has finished His workmanship on Kelly this side of eternity.

Like Iris only a year and a half ago, it seems to us a time all too soon, too early and too quickly.

It shocks us and begs the question, "Why?"

"Why would the Lord take them now, when they has so much more to give?"

Likely we will never be satisfied with any answer that we may come up with,

but, as the Lord tells us in Isaiah, **My thoughts are not your thoughts,**

neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9

And He calls us, as He did Kelly and Iris to trust Him, that this is best, both for them... and for us.

And just as our Lord was shaping Kelly through the difficult times in his life,

so He uses difficult times in our lives to teach and train us... to shape and refine us

as a precious and holy piece of workmanship.

To repent of our sins, and to seek His grace in Jesus;

To trust Him, even – and especially – when we don't understand how this can be good for us.

To consider our own life in this world – and the time that we have left – to consider:

– that the Lord could call us out of this life at any moment;

– that we would be ready, as both Kelly and Iris were, with a clean conscience through Jesus' blood;

– that we would be ready, prepared for our own death, not in fear, but in hope and joy,

knowing that our souls will be with Him in paradise

– and that on the last day, God will continue His workmanship on these bodies and raise them

from the dust to be glorious bodies to live and reign with Jesus for all eternity.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria