

A Good Word for Gordon Poole
February 24, 2007

The very first sermon I ever wrote and preached was based on this text from Matthew's gospel. As a seminary student taking my first class in homiletics we could pick any passage of scripture in the whole Bible to spend an entire semester working on for a sermon that would be preached to the whole class at the end of the semester. I lived with this text for that semester. I learned to love the words that were put together to create beautiful images: *lilies of the field and birds of the air - even Solomon in all his glory was not clothes like one of these*. This is the text that instantly jumped to my mind when I considered Gordon Poole. A man of deep faith has an understanding about worry. I believe Gordon understood that seeking God's kingdom and God's righteousness was the most important thing and all else falls in line after that. I can still see him – almost one year ago – perched up in his Intensive Care bed facing serious issues with his heart and saying, “Don't worry about me. I'm going to be fine.” (With the footnote – “just take care of Betty!) No matter what, Gordon understood that if he lived, he would be surrounded by family and friends and nurtured by the love of his life, Betty, and everything would be fine – no worries. And if he died, the promises of what is next would be fulfilled, and everything would be fine – no worries. What a way to live life. It was Gordon's way – and it should be ours as well.

Gordon was organized, detailed, and meticulous. He had an engineer's mind coupled with the compassion of Jesus. Not a bad combination! Working in the aerospace industry and moving all over the country – often landing jobs that settled their family close to some coast – east and west - Gordon was successful in business. And after retirement, he dedicated the next phase of his life to transitioning incarcerated persons

back into the mainstream of society. I do believe he must have seen those years with ECO as some of the most important moments of his life. Bringing hope and healing, bringing to life Jesus' command to forgive. It makes me think of some other words from Matthew's gospel: "*When was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?*" *And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'*"

(Matthew 25.37-40)

Gordon's family was the recipient of his deepest affection. Betty, you know he loved you deeply, and he spent 59 or his 79 years trying to make sure that you were happy. And you have cared for him over this last year with grace and dignity – fulfilling your vows: for better or for worse, in sickness and in health. Well done, good and faithful servant. He wanted only the best for Susan and for Mike – he wanted most of all for them to be happy, and he spent a lifetime trying to create an environment that would make for happiness for them. Surely Mike's death took its toll on all of you, but surely you survived that tragedy with the promises of forever with God – no worries. And I do believe he was about the best Pop that any grandson could imagine. He became your chauffeur taking you to get haircuts and to the movies and for ice cream and toting you to school when it rained and hauling your projects. He loved those years of being about the best Pop any grandson could imagine.

Gordon faithfully served his church. As a deacon and on pastor search committees and faithfully involved in the United Baptist Association and Hope Chapel, Gordon was a

man who put his faith into practice. With the meticulous mind of an engineer coupled with the compassion of Jesus, Gordon served his family and his church, and many many people in between. It is indeed good to have known Gordon. His life was a gift to all of us, and he will be missed. But his life is a testimony to no worries – live life to the fullest – here and now – and believe in the promise of forever with God. No worries indeed.

But let me be honest. No worries doesn't mean that Gordon was carefree or frivolous. Quite the contrary. I have laughed so many times this past week about Gordon in the hospital. The day before he died he was still clear headed. As Betty and I sat in his hospital room and made a list of questions for the doctor about the Hospice Unit, I didn't want to leave Gordon out. So I asked him if he had any questions. In typical Gordon fashion he said, "Give me a minute to think." Betty and I went on with our list – thinking Gordon was mainly too tired to really concentrate. He lifted his hand to get our attention and said, "How much does it cost?" We had already tried for more than a day to convince Gordon that money was not going to be an issue. But he insisted that we ask the doctor. So I wrote down his question. He also wanted to know how many square feet and was there a chance to buy in. That meticulous mind at work. I wrote down his questions. We asked him if he was alright with the decisions about his care. And Susan you would know that I would have to throw this in – he pointed to me and said, "I trust her judgment."

I'm glad, because I believe my judgment is right about this: Gordon Poole was a man of deep faith who followed Jesus. His life was full of love and fullness – even through adversity. And my judgment is that today Gordon has no worries. He was right – he is just fine. May it be so.