

Good Words for Charlie Mincey
July 2, 2004

As we sat with Charlie's daughters, we learned a little about him that we didn't know. We learned that the family joke is that they all wish they had had it as good as the dogs – he loved his dogs. We learned that he loved the beach, but I knew that already. Just Monday he told me he wanted one more trip to the beach. We learned that he always wanted to look his best – always well dressed, always looking good. We learned that he loved cars and traded cars like socks. And we learned that he had a good sense of humor and even a gentle spirit and tender heart that was usually kept hidden, though they knew it was there. We learned that he was a Tarheel fan through and through. We learned that he and Peggy were high school sweethearts and had been married for 61 years. That is a long time, Peggy, of living out a commitment that encompassed “for better for worse/in sickness and in health.” A long commitment seen to its end.

In sitting with Lucia, Marcia, and Debbie, we learned all of that, but more than what we learned, we witnessed something powerful. And they included Chuck (Charlie's baby boy) in the conversation when he couldn't be with us. We witnessed four adult children – Charlie's best gift to this world. That is what you are – children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren alike – a wonderful hope that the world might just be a better place because of who you are, what you've learned, who you are becoming. The best of who Charlie was is in you and you are that living legacy.

We gather here to worship God and to give thanks for the life of Charlie Mincey. In these kinds of times we long to hear a good word – we need to hear a good word. I am pleased to let you know that today I have a good word. I don't just have a good word, I have several good words.

Love Perhaps this is the best word of all. Charlie was a Child of God – Beloved was his name. Nothing can change that. Even on the days when we cannot accept it ourselves, we are loved by God and that is the best word.

Forgiveness Perhaps this is the best word of all. God’s unconditional love for us always brings an offering of forgiveness. Even on the days when we cannot forgive ourselves, we must know that God has the capacity – beyond all our knowing and understanding – to forgive and that is the best word.

Peace Perhaps this is the best word of all. I prayed with Charlie on Monday – just the two of us in his room. I held his hand and prayed that he would know a sense of God’s peace. After I said “Amen,” I looked into his weak, yet somehow alert eyes, and I said, “That is my best hope for your Charlie, that you will know God’s peace even today.” He nodded. I think he understood that peace was the best word of all for that is our Blessed Hope – that even today, Charlie rests in the abiding love, the gracious forgives, and the perfect peace of God Almighty. A Blessed Hope indeed.

When we talked about this service, it was Marcia who said, “You have to say what you say every Sunday at our church.” So I say it today. I say it for Charlie. I say it for the family. I say it for me. I say it for us all. At the end of our time of confession we always offer as an Assurance of Pardon these words:

You are loved.
You are forgiven.
So be at peace.

It doesn’t get any better than that. Those are the good words. And in them we learn how to offer a word of thanksgiving and celebration for the life of Charlie Mincey. May it be so. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We come to you today, O God, offering our thanks for the life of Charlie Mincey. In your all-loving nature, you have found a way to love us unconditionally, and we give thanks for that abiding love. Your grace indeed abounds and we find ourselves resting in your peace.

Bring your comfort this day on this family that they may feel a sense of your presence. Give them your love in their sorrow and walk with them in their journey of grief. You know all of our pain, so let your love be their healing balm. In the name of Christ we pray, Amen.