

## Past Sermons

### A Homily in Celebration of the Life of Bill Jenkins

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St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Salt Lake City  
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In the midst of life we are in death, and so it is today as we are gathered to celebrate the life of Bill Jenkins. It may be helpful to think of death as a horizon. When you think about how far it is to the horizon, to the limit of our sight, it is really not very far. We wouldn't think someone had ceased to exist because that person had moved to a place we couldn't see from where we are standing. Death is a similar kind of horizon, it's a moving from one kind of world into another. During WWII, Bill served on a destroyer escort. So we might say that death is like a ship sailing off into the distance, until finally it is gone from sight. The ship has not changed because we cannot see it. It is just as large and majestic as it was when it sat by the dock. In the same way, Bill, dwelling in our Lord's kingdom now, is still the vibrant man he always was when he was among us.

Not long after I first came to St. Paul's, Bill informed me that he wasn't religious - he just came to church! However, it is said that actions speak louder than words! Bill was long a faithful member here, first coming when he was twelve to join the scout troop. For almost 70 years he served his God and this parish in many capacities, as he did the Diocese of Utah. On May 20, 1948 standing before the altar here he made life-long vows to Jeanne, the love of his life, exactly one year after they had met. His sons and daughter, John, Jim, Jeff and Julia were baptized here, and grew up here, and some years ago, we celebrated the life and death of Jeanne, just as we are Bill's today. Following the recessional hymn, sometimes called the Navy Hymn, we will scatter Bill's ashes where Jeanne's were scattered, in the Memorial Garden which Bill developed in the memory of Jeanne. Together in life, together in death, and together now in the full presence of God.

Mark Twain once said, "Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry." That was the way that Bill lived and died. He died lying on the bathroom floor thinking that he was at a poker game. On being asked if he had a good hand. His last word was "Yep." That's how Bill thought about life. God had dealt him a "good hand." He loved his children dearly, and one only has to know them to know that he was a loving father. Although, I suspect, that his engineering penchant for planning everything down to the last jot and tittle was at times frustrating. He even budgeted his honeymoon with Jeanne down to the last penny, although he was 15 cents off because Jeanne wanted an extra packet of chewing gum. Bill also had the capacity to develop life-long friends, the friends he played poker with, the members of the Jacks or Better Patrol which developed out of the scouts, and the group who went to the Wyoming Homecoming game each year. We have all lost a dear friend and we shall miss his presence among us, as will Bill's Jack Russell terriers who have been his faithful companions for many years.

Death is not extinguishing the light from the Christian; it is putting out the lamp because the dawn has come, and light has overwhelmed the darkness. God will lift us up so we may continue on our earthly pilgrimage, knowing that we are bound together with all those we love, and all those, living and dead, who call Jesus Christ their Lord. One day we will be with Bill and all those we love, who have left this life and now dwell with God in his heavenly kingdom. So now let us commit Bill and ourselves to God's never failing love and care, knowing that God will give us strength and courage to face the days ahead, just as he gives new life now and in the age to come.

Amen.