

The Book of Revelation says you can hear the sound of harp music in heaven. I guess they'd better make way now for a guitar. Bill was a hard worker, self-employed in security work. He could look at doors and windows and find creative ways to hide wires, so you'd never know he was there. He fixed our front door on the church a few years ago. He was like that. He would be there if you had some job that needed fixing. He just liked helping people. He loved the outdoors –hunting, camping, and riding motorcycles. And he loved the guitar. He loved life, and he squeezed a lot of that love into his 51 years. He made you want to love him. I suspect that's why, in the midst of the tragedy of his illness, it was so easy for Lora, Chuck, Dana and other members of the family to love him and care for him, which you did so well. You just knew that Bill would have done the same thing for you, and probably had in one way or another.

If you're somebody who likes to help other people, it can be hard to let other people help you. But Bill did it. He believed in God and wanted things to be right with him. He accepted this illness with courage and determination. If there was a treatment to try, he would agree to it. But he always seemed in touch with the seriousness of his condition.

In John's gospel, when Lazarus was dying, Martha and Mary did all they could to help him. They summoned Jesus, but he didn't get there until after Lazarus had died. The whole experience of losing a family member so young must have been difficult for them, but they kept alive their faith in the one who told them, "I am the resurrection and the life."

The Book of Wisdom says our eyes cannot see what happens when people die, but we believe in the goodness of God and that the souls of the just will receive the care they deserve. Wisdom says, "The souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment shall touch them. They seemed in the view of the foolish to be dead and their passing away was thought an affliction, but they are in peace."

This is the faith that sustains us, and certainly the faith that Bill would want us to share today. A lot of people go through difficult times, even more difficult than Bill faced. But we believe that God sustains them through it all. God can use adversity as a time when people can show how good they really are. And God can take what looks like a loss and make it the beginning of a new kind of goodness, an end of suffering, an entrance into peace, and a gift of freedom. We all wish Bill could have stayed with us much longer, to fix another window, to share another laugh, and to sing another song. In a way, he is with us now more completely because he belongs to us all at whatever time we wish.

Our prayer today is that God will look as kindly on Bill as we have, and be faithful to the promises Jesus made to those who are upright of heart – promises we hope to enjoy as well. Then one day, we pray, we shall gather together again with Bill and all those we loved, in the presence of the God who made us, to sing a song of praise.