

# CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

## St. Munchin Church

Bill was a big, influential man among his family and friends. He had a real presence about him in a room, but he kept a lot to himself. When his illness started making it hard for him to get around, he didn't want people to know. He was a Marine who fought at Iwo Jima. He ran his own gas company for over 30 years. He was a strong guy, and he wanted to keep it that way. At his 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary a few years ago a lot of us came together to celebrate what Bill and Carol have accomplished and what they have meant to us. Since then Bill had a few more milestones he intended to live for, including his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. A lot of people doubted he would make it, but we should have known it would go his way. Bill made a lot of significant decisions about his treatment that affected the end of his life. Through it all, he did it his way. He did not fear the approach of death. He used his dying as a time to enjoy his home, his friends, his family and especially Carol. I suspect when Bill gets to heaven, a lot of things are going to have to go his way up there too. He was a real leader.

There are stories of leadership in the two scripture readings this morning. In the first we hear the aftermath of a great battle in the Old Testament. An invading force had taken over Jerusalem, but the citizens led a successful revolt to get the city and its temple back. A lot of people lost their lives. The leader of Israel, Judas, took up a collection among his soldiers to provide a sacrifice for them in the temple, because he believed in the resurrection of the dead. He wanted his soldiers to be freed from sin, and he expected those who had fallen to be forgiven and to rise again. Judas led the people in war, but also in finances and in religion.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples about his upcoming death. He did not view his death as an end or even a setback. He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." To explain how death is not loss but glory, Jesus compares it to a grain of wheat, planted in the soil, that produces much fruit. Jesus is leading his disciples into a way of life, but also into the way of eternal life. "If you love your life, you will lose it; if you hate your life you will preserve it. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be." Jesus leads those who follow.

Bill led us in a lot of ways. He taught people how to live a good life. He showed the importance of fighting for your country, the value of hard work, the love that holds families together and a faith in eternal life. He was a real leader. But now he comes to the Good Shepherd who guides him safely home.

My brothers and sisters, throughout our lives we meet people who have a profound influence on our thoughts and actions. We come here today to honor Bill, for the role he played, but more importantly to put our lives in the hands of God, who sent us Jesus to influence us more than anyone else could. It's

hard to lose someone we love at any time of year, but especially at Christmas. Still, the message of Christmas will reach out to hold us stronger than ever. God has not left us alone. God sends us a savior, the leader of all leaders, Jesus Christ.