

FUNERAL OF KEVIN AQUINO | JUNE 16, 2022

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-26, 31-33 | PSALM 23

When I think of Kevin, the first word that comes to mind is “more.”

Kevin was someone who always wanted to get more out of life. I’ve always had a hunch that desire for more is why Kevin loved music so much. Because there was always something new to discover. More cultures, more ideas, more archives. Kevin never wanted to talk about music we both liked as much as he did music that he had just discovered. When I was looking back at our text chain this week, it was mostly just a bunch of music videos with comments that said, “check this out.” Music helped him get more out of life.

And he spoke about his faith that way, too. Sometimes when Kevin was waiting for one of the boys after confirmation, he’d tell me that he wasn’t really concerned with them learning stuff like the Ten Commandments. (“Ten is too many, so pick three,” he’d say.) No, he wanted them to know that there was more to life than just the stuff they experienced every day. There was more to life than school and activities and teachers and friends and parents and neighbors. That you always wanted to be exploring life beyond just the day-to-day routines, reaching beyond yourself. Kevin’s faith made his life bigger.

And Kevin brought more out of other people. One of Kevin’s great gifts was that he knew who he was. I was just telling Beth the other day that one of the funny parts of being a pastor is watching how people’s behavior changes when they realize you’re in the room. Kevin did not change. He was who he was.

The upshot of this, at least within our community, was that Kevin gave people the ability to be themselves. He was someone who made you feel like you were interesting, worth spending time with. Kevin gave people the ability to share more of themselves.

And yet, considering how much more he wanted out of life and how much more he brought out of others, it is frustrating that we aren’t left with more after Kevin’s death. Over the past week, many of you have told me that you wished you knew more. Or that you understood what he was going through. Or that you wish you could make sense of it.

Part of what makes Kevin’s death so painful is that we can’t know. We can never fully understand. We can’t fully make sense of it. There is nothing more than what we already have.

But whenever we are at the end of our resources, our planning, our attempts at life, there is still more to God. Even when our despair grows too deep for words, God still hears our cries. Even when the gift of life becomes too great a burden to bear, God understands. There is always more understanding in God than pain in our lives. And so even in death, we dwell in the heart of Christ.

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A couple of particular words.

Gavin and Ryan. Your dad's death cuts deep. It's a wound in your life. It affects everything, and it's hard to see much of anything else. You might remember that when the risen Jesus appears to his disciples in John's gospel, he still has the marks of the crucifixion on his hands and side. God knows the pain you're going through right now. But at some point, that wound you have today will become a scar. It will never go away entirely, it will always be a part of you, but it will not define your life or your identity or your future. Your dad's life was about more than his death. And your lives are about more than this experience.

Beth. When you and Kevin were married in this sanctuary back in 1999, the marriage rite included a little note at the beginning that Pastor George would have read. You've probably forgotten it, but it's a helpful reminder today. "The gladness of marriage can be overcast," it began, but "we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored." Even if your life has been overshadowed by Kevin's death, God sustains you along the way. And one day at a time, your joy will be restored. So wherever you find joy in the days ahead, embrace it. As the poet Mary Oliver wrote, "Joy is not meant to be a crumb." Even as God grieves our deaths with us, so to does God celebrate our joys.

So even as we grieve tonight, we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Kevin's life may have ended, but as the author of Lamentations writes, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end." In life and in death, there's always more.

Joseph Schattauer Paillé, Pastor