

Memorial Service
for
J. Walter Sanders
February 12, 2011
Sullivan King Mortuary, Anderson, SC
James R. Thomason, Pastor

Psalm 23 ¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Worship Remembrance Thanksgiving // Jesus:

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Matthew 11:28-29 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. // "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in our weakness."

Prayer

Walt Sanders loved the hymns of our faith—especially those written by BB McKinney. Walt would go to Music Week at Ridgecrest and McKinney would be there leading the music. He got to know him and appreciate his music and spirit when Walt was just a young man.

McKinney wrote such Baptist standards as *Serve the Lord with Gladness* and *Satisfied with Jesus; Glorious Is Thy Name*, and *Let Others See Jesus in You*.

Walt's favorite, though, was the one that Kelly is going to play for us now: *Never Alone*. Do you remember it? I haven't sung it in a while, but I cut my teeth on it growing up at FBC Simpsonville.

May it serve as a reminder for us of our Lord's presence with us here in this place, as well as in every moment of our lives.

Organ: Never Alone

I've seen the lightning flashing,
And heard the thunder roll,
I've felt sin's breakers dashing,
Trying to conquer my soul;
I've heard the voice of my Savior,
Telling me still to fight on,

He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

Refrain: No, never alone, No, never alone, He
promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.

This was Walt's favorite hymn for a long time, but
doesn't this third verse speak so clearly and
powerfully to Walt's recent life experiences:

3. When in affliction's valley
I'm treading the road of care,
My Savior helps me to carry
My cross when heavy to bear,
Though all around me is darkness,
Earthly joys all flown;
My Savior whispers His promise,
"I never will leave thee alone."

What a wonderful reminder that old hymn provides
that no matter what we face in life, we are safe,
secure, and comforted by the assurance of the Lord's
presence with us.

And then, when the time comes for us, we're not
alone even in the valley of the shadow. The Good
Shepherd comes to take us home. We're never alone.

I count it a privilege to be here to share with you in
this memorial service for my friend and yours, Walter
Sanders. Walt and I talked on many occasions, but
especially after Wednesday evening Bible Study.

I learned about his keen interest in anything having to
do with trains and railroads. When I would mention

the transportation museum in Roanoke, VA, where our family lived for nine years, Walt would light up. He'd been there. Loved the place. Knew all about it!

Then there was the matter of Ham Radio—he loved his Anderson Radio Club; and more recently, he had developed a fascination with high definition TV—he brought me a hand-written list of all the stations that we could get with just a high def. antenna.

And then there was his interest in all things historical. I wish he could be with us at church tomorrow when we host the centennial worship service for Anderson University.

He would so enjoy hearing some of the shared history between our church and the college—even though he would probably already know every bit of it—and could add some to it!

But most of all, friends, Walt Sanders loved his Lord, his church, and the Bible. He was such a dedicated student of Scripture. He never missed worship, SS, and Wed. Bible study.

He also taught the Bible in his Sunday School Class. That's where you really learn so much—when you're preparing to teach others—and Walt was always well-prepared. So in his memory today, I want to share with you a few special promises from God's word.

1) One of the greatest promises in the Bible is found in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he

gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Walt Sanders built his life on that verse--on the Gospel it proclaims, and the Lord to whom it bears witness.

- *in* that verse Walt personally found that life in Christ Jesus that's eternal;
- *through* that verse he developed a Christian witness that always sought to point others toward the Savior.

I heard recently from one of his physical therapists how he would challenge those who were working with him to find the answer to some question he would ask them about the Bible. He had the whole group studying the Bible to find the answer!

- Also, *by* this most loved verse in the Bible, by embracing its message of God's love, Walt experienced the peace of knowing that his life was in the Lord's hands and that God's love would surround him forever. He would never be alone!

Walt Sanders, you see, had that wonderful assurance that he was living his life right in the middle of God's love—which set him free to love all of us so well. And he really did—didn't he?

Walt always made me feel loved and appreciated. He always had some kind words to say about the sermon or the Bible study. Often, he would share a story with me, or pass along some information that he thought I might find helpful or interesting.

Bottom line, it's so much easier to accept this great truth concerning God's love for us when we have folks like Walt Sanders around who put a face to God's love—who live out God's love before us each day.

2) Now, a second promise. It's found in II Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

Walt Sanders ran his race faithfully to the very end! He knew what was important, the things he valued in life, the commitments that mattered most, and he stuck to them. Now Walt Sanders is standing in the presence of his Lord.

Sometimes when we come to a service like this, we focus on what we've lost—and that's tempting—especially for those of us who are part of those Wednesday evening studies—and I'm sure it's the same for those who are in the Beusse SS Class—it just won't seem the same without Walt with us!

But I know Walt would be the first to tell us not to focus on what we've lost, but instead...on what he has gained! He knew his Bible well. He didn't just read it, he studied it and took it to heart.

So Walt's hope had lots of content to it. He looked forward to a new body, a new energy, a new LIFE!

Just think of all he has gained now, experiencing for himself what he often taught about in Sunday School, wearing now that "crown of righteousness"--awarded

to him by the Lord Himself; at home in glory now, in a mansion prepared just for him!

3. Now, there's one other promise I'll mention briefly. It's for all of us who are still here, and not yet there. It's found in John 14:18 where Jesus promises: "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you."

Walt never married. He did point to some flowers in his hospital room a few weeks back, and tell me they were from his girlfriend. He smiled real big when he said that—although he didn't go into any details.

But Walt's closest family, his mom and dad, have been long gone. With Walt's keen sense of history, I can only imagine how he must have felt like his roots had been severed with their passing--that he was in some way cut off from his past.

But Walt had a wonderful assurance that he was not alone in this world. There was an awareness of the Lord's presence in Walt's life...that he probably depended on more deeply, and for a longer part of his journey through life, than most of the rest of us.

Walt heard it and took it to heart when his good friend Jesus said to him "I will not leave you comfortless."

That's the way the King James translates John 14:18—and what a great promise that is. But some of the newer translations of this verse go back to the original Greek word used here, and they translate the verse: "I will not leave you as orphans."

Without mom and dad, without wife and other family, it would have been easy enough for Walt to feel kinda' "orphaned," don't you think? But I never heard that, nor sensed it in Walt's life. There was that keen

sense of the Lord's presence in his life. He was Never Alone.

Verse 4: He died for me on the mountain,
For me they pierced His side,
For me He opened the fountain,
The crimson, cleansing tide;
For me He's waiting in glory,
Seated upon His throne,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

This was Walter Sanders faith, friends. And now faith, for Walt, has been made sight.

And so we say today, as people who share this faith that he spent his life teaching and living, "Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Closing Prayer