

Memorial Service

Malena Montford

22/10/09

Good afternoon, for those who don 't know me my name is Paul Mckendrick and I am the Presbyterian minister here at Evans Head.

It was with great sadness and shock that I responded to the news of Malena's death. Having 4 children of my own, my heart immediately went out to Rob and Christine. As it still does today.

As today we come together to support Rob and Christine, we come to console each other and we come to remember and to farewell Malena.

Though her life was too short in our estimations, her short life still impacted us all and will continue to impact us for the rest of our lives.

So we come together to love one another through this time and to take one small step on our road of healing the immense pain in our hearts.

At times like these it is good to hear the words of Jesus who said;

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

A great promise from Jesus. And at times like these a great comfort that we can come to him and he will give us peace. Let's do that now Lets pray.

Let us Pray,

Heavenly Father your love is stronger than death
for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ
we can receive the wonderful gift of eternal life.

Help us as we hear your promises today
to believe and to receive the comfort they offer.
Lord, You are the giver of hope
May we know the joy & peace that comes from your love.

Lord God you are the rock in whom we can take refuge
you are always there to help in times of trouble
you are always there to give hope and strength.

Help us to affirm our faith that
you, the Almighty God, are with us,
so that our fears may be dispelled,
our anxious hearts quietened,
our loneliness eased and our hope and faith restored,
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

Her Role Down here is Done:

Her little soul has touched us all

She didn't need to stay:

Her spirit touched each one of us

Before it sailed away

We all know souls arrive on earth

With special roles to fill

And hers has fully played its part,

Her memory guides us still

She had a very special soul

She stayed just for awhile

So if or when you are feeling sad

Recall her with a smile

For then you'll know inside your heart

The reason why she's gone;

And never feel too empty that

Her role down here is done.

Her Spirit touched each one of us,

No other ever could.

Forever will we cherish her

The way we know we should!

As we are gathered here this afternoon, as we look at the photo of Malena, as we have heard the Poem and we sit and think about what we have just gone through and our thoughts move to what might be ahead for us after this hurt. It is sometime hard to fathom any of it.

How do we put it into perspective, how do we grasp a little bit of what the future holds, of hope in this time of sadness? Well I think the best place to go is to the one the who made us and knows us and loves us. God.

To his word the bible and hear what he has to say.

So I am going to read you a short passage from the bible it is Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 and then I will explain it briefly and I pray that in some way it may play its part to help us see a glimmer of light, of hope here this afternoon.

Bible Reading - Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

What does the worker gain from his toil?
I have seen the burden God has laid on men.
He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the hearts of men;
yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Death comes to us all - one day.

It's the one thing in life that we just can't avoid
No matter how long we live.

No matter how fit & healthy we've been in our life
- we are all, at some point,
- confronted with our mortality

And today, with Malena we are reminded of the fragility of life at any age.

And the reading from Ecclesiastes,
is a reminder, that **OUR TIME WILL COME.**

The very opening line in Ecclesiastes 3 says

*There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die.*

That passage is about everything having a time.

Which ties so well with the Poem that Robbie read earlier.

This passage in Ecclesiastes was popularised in the 1960's in the song
"Turn, Turn, Turn." by The Byrds.

The song went through something of a revival a few years ago as the Sound
Track for the movie *Forrest Gump*.

Those words from Ecclesiastes 3, I think express two things

- In one sense life seems futile & meaningless

- the seasons come & go
- relationships come & go
- our own lives,

and the lives of people we know & love, come & go.

And sometimes we feel that our lives

don't really seem to be **GOING ANYWHERE.**

Yet there is also a sense in the passage that

- there **MUST BE SOMETHING MORE.**

Everything in life does seem to have

A TIME AND A REASON.

There must be some meaning & purpose & hope in life

- But, what hope is there in the face of death?

Well what the song leaves out is v10-11 of that passage.

It says

*I have seen the burden God has laid on men.
He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the hearts of men*

Two beautiful sentences there:

He has made everything beautiful in its time,
and God has set ETERNITY IN OUR HEARTS

When we feel that there has to be MORE TO LIFE
than what we see around us.

When we feel that there MUST BE
some meaning & purpose & hope
especially in the face of great tragedy.
Like Malena's life taken so early.

When we feel that death simply CAN'T BE THE END.
- That's when we need to remember that
God has THE ANSWER.

He has set eternity in our hearts
that we might SEEK HIM.

Y'see the good news is - that death need not be final
- it need not be the end.

How is that possible?

Well that's what the rest of the Bible is all about.

God has opened the way for us to come to him
by sending his Son the Lord Jesus into the world.

Jesus once said *"I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die"*

It's a big claim, isn't it?

Jesus is actually saying that if you trust in Him
- you will not die.

Yes, although this mortal body will one day pass away,
- we can have absolute confidence

knowing we will live with him forever
in the place he has prepared for us.

He promises us ETERNAL LIFE
- That ETERNITY, that is set in our hearts,
can be made a REALITY.

Y'see the fact is this life is not all there is to life!
Life on this earth is, in a sense,
just a DRESS REHEARSAL
for the life to come.

At a time like this, in our pain, as we search for meaning and hope .

God opens his arms wide in Jesus and gives us the comfort that there is life
beyond death , that for little Malena she will not have to go through all the
turmoil, confusion, tension we do but she is safe in his arms.

And for us there is the promise that when we trust in Jesus, death is not the
end for us either.

Eternity with God in perfection is our great hope.

A sure hope that can give us light and life in this time of darkness.

I pray it does for us all today.

We are going to listen to a song now and just take some time to reflect, to
reflect on little Malena, on life and on hope.

Song:

Prayer:

DHF

We come to you now and you know our hearts, you know our hurt, and you know our fears. We ask Lord that you will touch us with your peace that we may seek you and know your love and the sure hope we have in Jesus. That when we trust in him we have an eternity safe and secure with you.

Lord stand by all those who have been impacted by Malena, though her time was short she has still had an enormous impact on us all.

Lord we commit to you Robert and Christine, only you know what they are going through, may you be their comfort and their strength. Place good friends and family around them Lord to love and support them at this time.

Lord we commit to you all of Malena's family, for Madeline Lord who was so looking forward to having a new little sister, comfort her lord.

For Kay, Bill, Wayne and Sharon, for Theresa, Robbie, Max and Helena, May they find their strength and comfort in you and may you place their family and good friends around them to comfort them at this time.

We commit to you Lord all others who are saddened by Malena's death, may they lean on your strength, that they may be upheld and believe the goodnews of life beyond death through Jesus. To know that death is not the last goodbye when we trust and believe in Jesus.

And finally Lord we commit to you Malena may she live with you in perfection and your care for all eternity.

In Jesus name Amen