

Service of Committal
Matthew James Lynn
July 7, 1997
Creston, Washington

Greeting: *We gather together in this consecrated place in the name of the one who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." We come grieving the death of Matthew James Lynn. We come grieving the loss of all he meant in Betsy and Warren's life, in the life of this family, and in this community. But we also come, believing in the final triumph of God's love and the ultimate hope of eternal life.*

Reading: Matthew 5:3-10

Prayer: *O God, Creator of all life, we pray for faith and understanding in the midst of our pain. Help us to accept death as a part of life, trusting in your goodness and great love for every one of us. We ache with sadness because we must let go of Matthew and all that he represented in our lives. But we release him into your loving presence, trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ who took little children in his arms and blessed them.*

Committal: *And now, holding on to the love that will stay with us always, we commit to the ground the ashes of Matthew James Lynn in the assurance that he lives the glory of God's presence. Strengthen by faith that is stronger than grief and doubt, we commit his spirit into the arms of God's gracious mercy.*

Blessing: *Trusting in the sure promise of the resurrection, we ask you, O God, to receive Matthew into the never-ending love of your Holy Realm in the name of Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Benediction: *The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace, this day and forever more. Amen.*

Memorial Service
Creston Christian Church
July 7, 1997
Matthew James Lynn
Born June 30, 1997
to Betsy and Warren Lynn

Prelude

Welcome and Introductions

Frances Rhodes

Greeting

It's hard to believe I was here with you a little over a week ago. So much as happened since we worshipped together. There have been so many emotions. Expectation, excitement, hope, fear. We've rejoiced at the birth and continued good health of Betsy and Warren's son Philip Charles. We've cried over the death of his twin brother Matthew James. Today some of us come to this place feeling deep sorrow and disappointment at the loss of a dream. Some of us come feeling empty and helpless to do or to say anything that will bring comfort. Some of us come feeling angry that we're being asked to say good-bye just when we were ready to say hello. Whatever we're feeling, we bring all of those emotions to this place knowing that they will be honored by this community and held in the grace of God.

Hymn: "Healer of Our Every Ill"

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Prayer of Invocation

Gracious and loving God, we come to you today as our refuge and strength in this time of loss. Gather us in, O God of comfort. Bless us with the peace of your presence. Collect up all the feelings we bring with us. Take all of who we are and make of us one body, the Body of Christ, that we may truly share each other's pain and suffer with those who are suffering. In this time of worship, help us find hope through your Word in scripture. Help us find comfort through the love of family and friends. Help us find courage for the days ahead through the strength of your Spirit, for we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the one we call the Resurrection and the Life. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:4-9

Meditation

The theme song for the music *RENT* asks the question, "How do you measure a life?" It's a good question. Sometimes, we answer it at a memorial service by listing people's accomplishments. The schools they attended, the jobs they did, the positions of honor they held. Of course, it's good and right that we honor those who have died by remembering what they did during their lives.

But there's also a danger in focusing too much on people's achievements. Sometimes when we do that, we begin to get the idea that our worth is determined by what we attain. And what pressure that kind of thinking creates in us--not only to do things well, but to do things perfectly. To be more. To acquire more. To never make mistakes. To never admit we need anything.

But when a baby dies, when someone like Matthew James dies who's not lived long enough to accomplish anything, we find ourselves revisiting that question in a new way. How DO we measure a human life?

However we might answer, Ephesians reminds us that our worth has nothing to do with works. It has everything to do with grace. God's grace. It's not what we accomplish that gives our lives value. What makes our lives important is the fact that we are loved by God. God's love is a gift. There's nothing we need to do to earn it. There's nothing we CAN do to earn it.

In that respect, all of us in this room share that same human condition with each other and with Matthew James Lynn: he was a beloved child of God and THAT'S what gives his life meaning.

Now, there are some well-meaning folks who might take that one step farther to say, "God loved Matthew so much, he wanted him to be in heaven instead of on earth with his parents. I've got to say, I don't believe that for a minute. I don't believe God acts in that kind of capricious manner. But the scripture DOES tell us that God loves us as one who knows what it's like to be in our shoes. As one who knows what it's like to lose a son to death. Today, we worship a God who cries when we cry. Who enters into our suffering with us.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, that no matter what kind of tragedy comes our way, God will never pull away from us. In his letter to the Romans, Paul writes these familiar words: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." It's that love we can trust without question.

Prayer

God of all comfort who knows our suffering, who brings us hope in our despair, we give you thanks that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus. In the days and months ahead, we pray that you would come to us in the ordinary things of life--through the kind words of those who care, through the nourishment of food, through the beauty of the setting sun across the wheatfields.

May your presence give courage and comfort to those who are in sorrow, especially to Betsy and Warren, that they may find strength as they continue in your service. And now, trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ who took little children in his arms and blessed them, holding onto the love that will stay with us always, we commit into your care your precious child Matthew James Lynn. We ask that you would keep him in death as you have promised to keep us in life, for you are the source of all our hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace, this day and forever more. Amen.