

“Christ the King” by Larry Rawlings



Jubilee

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[The following is a transcript of Larry's sermon]

Good morning. After Cynthia's sermon a couple of weeks ago, I decided that I would pick my own memorial service picture. Not that I'm planning to be going anytime soon, but I want to pick my own picture. If Erica could put that up for everyone. *[photo of Larry with his arms around two little children on screen]*

Oh, that's me! Me and my 2 little darlings! And so the little boy on the left. His name is Everett. I was actually just a dog walker for some younger parents. And so Everett was born. I remember Mark took him to the Potomac speaker meeting one day, in Bowie. He was 11 days old. Mark had to go to bathroom. He said, "you want to hold him?" and I hesitated. But I did take the little guy in my hand. I meant he was 11 days old. So he'll be 10 this week. He called me Uncle Larry for a long, long, long time, until one day he started going to school—and I would never forget the hurt—well, he just called me Larry. Yeah. So he's figured it out. If someone has told him something you know. He knows that I'm not his uncle.

And then Amelia came along. Amelia's 7 now, but she was like 3 or 4 then. And since we saw some of Sandra's art, I want to show you some of Amelia's art. [*holds up abstract collage*].

And so I've had enough experience with children not to ask them what it is. Wait for them to tell you.

Anybody want to guess what that is. [*inaudible responses from congregation*] Yeah, no, it's a dreamcatcher. Yeah, you hang it over your bed and it catches bad dreams. And I kept that up there. I thought that was the most inspiring thing, very sharp and very clever of her and she was only 4 years old. She made that for me. But yeah.

So I just started with my own memorial service picture, you know, whenever that happens. My mother may not like it, but still.

Now I've had to deal with a lot of loss this year. You know my good friend John Addison, who came to church when Katie and I did the "Hole in the Bucket" thing—he came to hear that. He died mid-August. And he was living in the apartment that I'm living in now. I've known him for 30 something years. So I was

there to watch his demise with dementia, and it was sad because initially he started forgetting the lyrics to songs. And then it was he was calling me in the middle of the night because he would hear tick-tick tick-tick in his car, and that would be the emergency light, and he didn't know how to turn the headlights on or off. All that kind of stuff happened to him.

And in the end he passed away not liking me because I sold his car. He had two car accidents within a 24-hour period. One of them I saw. The second one he told me about how it happened.

He'd smashed into a truck, and he told me he said, "Well, I just sat in the truck and the guy somehow just went away."

But you know him sitting in the truck was history repeating itself because his sister also had dementia. They allowed her to drive, and she had had a car accident, too. This was on the news in the city where they lived. The car caught on fire. You know what she did? She sat right in the car. Police officer came and dragged her out. She would have just burnt up in the car.

You know it's the deterioration of the mind, dementia. My first experience with dementia was my aunt. A number of years ago I went to visit her at the nursing home up on Mezzerot Road, and we laughed and we had such a good time. Man I couldn't wait for the next seven days to go by, so I'd go visit her again. When I walked in the room that she said to me, What are you doing here? I'm here to visit you. No, you're not. You're here to steal my Halloween candy, she said to me. It's the middle of summer, and I say, I've not stolen anything from you. She said, No, not only your thief, you're a liar, too. She was yelling and screaming at me. I didn't know what to do. I my first experience with dementia, and it hurt absolutely. I remember walking out. I said what the heck just happened there? So I called my cousin, and she explained to me that my Aunt Mary had dementia, it had taken her mind.

You know it's really hurtful sometimes to deal with some people that have dementia. But, you know, none of them want to give up their car, if they have a car and they can get around. John was really was angry at me when I sold this car because he told me, I want you to get my car back. And I said, I sold it, I can't get I can't get it back.

So I have a little prayer for those that I mentioned. I initially wanted to talk about this at the peace and justice candle. So I've been holding onto this prayer so I want to say it now.

Loving God, healer and comforter, we pray for those who suffer from anxiety, ambiguity and confusion of any form of dementia. Look with mercy upon their distress, confusion, or isolation. Shelter them with dignity and peace. Grant them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help. In face of loss of memory and control, increase their confidence in you, and strengthen their caregivers.

Lord, helped their caregivers to separate from this disease the past shortcomings of those they care for, and to give and not hold today's deteriorating brain against them.

Lord, help them to remember that they are serving you as they assist those in need. Amen.

So okay. So let's see

If you identify yourself as old, or someone has called you old, or your categorized old, everyone raise your hand to God said, Thank you.

My brother, died in his thirties, you know; and my cousin Brian died at 19; my friend Kevin died at 22, my aunt Dorothy at 31. You know those people were never labeled old. Aging is a privilege, but you know getting old is not so bad either. You know, to be labeled. as old, you know, and so I embrace

that. I absolutely I embrace that.

As we get old we have to make a lot of changes in our life. You know, we don't move as fast, I don't move as fast. You know I'm much more careful about picking things up, you know, and volunteering to help people move furniture and all that kind of stuff. I don't try to do that stuff anymore. Try to make changes in our lives. I was encouraged by an old woman on rollers skates – did you guys see that on Facebook? I'm not act suggesting you guys do that, you know, because when I fall it's harder to get up. I fell in the house the other day. And it really hurt, really bad.

So I try to make some simple changes in my life. I'm trying to read, to keep my mind sharp because I'm a guy who likes to watch TV all the time, and I got a suggestions off of one of the radio stations. It said that if you were to watch a mini series so that you can keep abreast of what went on before and try to follow it all the way through, you know. And so that's one of those suggestions.

Well, we're all getting older. What we gonna do except say yay, just say yeah, and just be happy about that. I am. I'm absolutely happy about getting over to 61, you know. My brother was gone at 30, you know. My grandmother died at 65 years old, you know, and so I I talk about her because I truly miss her. She was the one that raised me, you know, and she taught me so many things.

She loved to cook. She taught me how to cook. Mainly she taught me how to flip a pancake. I can fill the whole pan with pancake mix. I can flip that thing right in there. She taught me how to do that. Initially, you know how you hesitate and then it's all over the stove? But yeah, I was able to accomplish that. And she taught me that. My grandmother, she taught me all those amazing things, and she died.

My grandfather lived to be 99 or 100. Well back then, you

know, they didn't keep records that well, so either he was 99 or a 100, but he was up there, to say he lived a wonderful life. He lost—the dementia set in in his mid-nineties. You know, he was still driving, and he remembered who I was. He called me about my name. I was pretty touched by it.

The same thing with Kenny Shaw, who was a part of this congregation. I remember I spent like the last day with Kenny the day before he died, and he had this closeness of, God, and he was not believe. Unbelievably he spoke of God, every word that came out of his mouth. He lived a long life, too. He was wonderful in this church congregation, you know, he did a lot for us. He cared for everybody here, and we also cared for him when he was here. God bless you, Kenny, we miss you.

So you know that's gonna happen. I've got a I've got to go to poem for the ageing. I actually got this off of Facebook, and I liked it so I decided I would share it with you. It's a little poem for the ageing, so true it hurts.

*Another year has past,
and we're all a little older
Last summer felt hotter
And winter seems much colder.*

*There was a time, not long ago,
When life was quite a blast.
Now I fully understand
about living in the past.*

*We used to go to weddings,
football games and lunches.
Now we go to funeral homes,
And after funerals, brunches*

*We used to go out dining
and couldn't get our fill.
Now we ask for doggie bags,
come home and take a pill.*

*We used to often travel
to places near far.
Now we get sore asses
from riding in a car.*

*We used to go to nightclubs
and drink a little booze.
Now we stay home at night
and watch the evening news.*

*That my friend, is how life is.
And now my tale is told.
So enjoy each day and live it up
before you're too damn old.*

And so Father Michael offers insight on the scriptures. He says,

Nothing could make it clearer than today's Gospel that Jesus' kingdom is totally different from any other kingdom we know. Jesus the prisoner identifies himself not with the rich and powerful, which you might expect since God is rich and all things and is all powerful.

No, Jesus identifies himself with just the opposite kind of people, those who have nothing, who are the mercy of other people, utterly dependent on others, those who have no control of their lives, their circumstances or any property. He identifies with people who can identify with that throne, the cross. In accepting the cross, Jesus joined himself to the lowest people of his society, who could be lower than the convicted criminal on a death row cross?

The crucified Jesus is a sign that he is offering himself to everyone, especially those considered the lowest – a sign that he is not forcing himself on us, but by giving himself to us in weakness and apparent defeat. On the throne of the cross he pleads for our compassion and our help.

No wonder the Romans and many others in the first three centuries thought Christians were absolutely crazy, out of the minds to worship a powerless, executed criminal.

A lot of people in our world today think that we are crazy because we think human beings can know the truth. They think that we are worse than crazy; they think we and anyone else who believes in God are dangerous, that we are hurting human society and progress.

It's not hard to see why. Some people who believe in God do bad things. And too many of us have made Jesus like the King or Queen of England, a nice royal figurehead who shows up on Sunday and Holydays and holidays, but who has not real power and no influence on our way of thinking or living.

We see this so clearly in our politics. Every politician and all parties want Kind Jesus on their side. Both sides pick and choose the assumed truths they want Jesus and us to support. Voters flip from side to side, throwing incumbents out on a regular basis, because they can't give people the painless prosperity they want.

The church's record doesn't look too good either, when it comes to abusive clergy. All statements to the contrary, this all makes it very clear that Jesus' Kingdom is not in this world.

Then there are those others who insist on their own way, radicals and fundamentalists who think they serve Christ the King, who work to force their way of thinking and style of religion upon others, those who make kinds of themselves.

But Jesus Christ is a real king, actually the only true king. But he is a king that does not force us, does not rely on violence, threats or punishments, does not draft us into an army nor waste our live in wars. We can choose and serve another kind, move to another kingdom is we want, join the armed forces of someone or something else. Jesus will not

stop us. He gives us freedom to choose whom to serve. As Bob Dylan said,

*It may be the devil or it may be the Lord,
but ya gotta serve somebody.*

Amen.

Before I go, I've been thinking about this for a while. I have been in three mission groups here. And I left two mission groups with disputes with Joan and with Peter. I called them some horrible names during that. And they repeated those names to you. Guys, I saw it, and it hurt me. I mean I said it to them to be hurtful, but then I didn't think that they would accept it and share. I was calling Joan a bigot, and I was calling Peter a racist.

You know neither one of them – the situation was kind of funny, unfair. She's not a bigot, and he's not a racist. I've been here for 15 years. I know, I absolutely know, that's not true. But to say it in my own defense, it felt good at the time, you know.

I remember John M, over here, sponsored me in sobriety. And I was telling him someone in the church was racist. I heard in his voice he said: Why is that racist? And I remember that.

There are no racists in this church, or you'd be in the wrong place. We don't engage in that here. We may get some things wrong, you know. We may get some things wrong, and to quote Brenda, we may act in a racist manner, but that doesn't mean that we're racist. You know the word, people.

And so I wanted to put that out there and clear the air with Joan and clear the air with Peter, because they're not. Joan and Doug helped me pay for my grandfather's funeral. You know half of the church drove all the way to Annapolis, to my grandfather's funeral. They had never seen this old black man

before, but they still drove out to Annapolis. That doesn't happen everywhere, you know. And so I have a lot of gratitude for that. And whatever issues I had with Joan and Peter, we've worked them out for most part, too. That's where I come to the end.