

Rev. Randy Thorman
Eulogy of Frank Jarvis Meyer Jr

First United Methodist Church
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In Memory of
Frank J Meyer Jr
1920 - 2014

Transcript

Family, I want to share with you that you have been in my prayers. I want to share with you also what a great privilege it is for me to have the chance to serve you in a time that I know is difficult for you, but I'm privileged to serve you and serve my savior in this way. I pray that as we remember Frank's life today and we look at the word of God and that you will be encouraged by the things that we do and the things that are said here today. I'll share with you quite frankly, too, that I found this is quite a challenge as I studied and learned more about the life of Frank Meyer.

I found that he was a very impressive man and he lived a very impressive life. For me to try to honor his memory in a few short words, in a few short moments is really beyond my capacity. I will share with you that I really didn't have the privilege of knowing Frank. I will say, however, that I met Frank about a couple of years ago. I would also say that I have come to know about Frank through conversations with some of the family, more extensive conversations with Steve, but also through studying his biography.

Again I ask you to pray with me as we honor his memory and we honor our Lord and Savior today. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the great hope of the resurrection. Lord, I know as his family and friends are gathered here today that their hearts are sorrowful and in mourning, and, indeed, that's fitting. But, Lord, I pray that your Holy Spirit would minister to them and remind them, Father, that we don't mourn as those who have no hope. Lord, we gather here and we're sorrowful for the one who is no longer with us, but we also rejoice in the hope of the resurrection, and, Father, that we can truly say how great you are today. Lord, I pray that you would offer this family comfort, that your Holy Spirit would continually minister to them. I ask these things in the great name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Frank Jarvis Meyer, Jr. was born in Oklahoma City where he grew up and he graduated from Classen High School. You might want to say that Frank was Sooner born and Sooner bred, but that would be a bit of a mistake in the fact that it was in Indiana where Frank had two of his greatest accomplishments that would set him on his path for the rest of his life.

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In Indiana, he graduated from Purdue University. He was a proud Boilermaker fan all of his life. He achieved a degree there that was going to serve him well throughout his life.

It was also in Indiana that he had a second great accomplishment. Now you'll have to bear with me, but this great accomplishment was the purchase of a 1928 Packard. You might go, now, what kind of accomplishment is that? Let me share with you a story, and some of you are aware of this. When he purchased that Packard, he purchased it from a friend. That friend was also dating a young lady whose name was Virginia Ginny Wright, and she became Frank's wife for the next fifty-seven years. Frank liked to joke a little bit, and he joked and said that Ginny came with the car. She didn't come with the car, but if that were the case, indeed, you would say the purchase of that car was one of the most important things that he did in his life. When a man finds a wife, it is a good thing and he was blessed with a good wife.

After graduating from Purdue, Frank served his country during World War II, seeing action in Europe where he achieved the rank of Captain serving in the 294th Field Artillery Observation Battalion as Headquarters Commander. Following the war, Frank and Ginny moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and then in 1949 to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where they would eventually raise their three children, Mike, Stacey, and Steve. Upon arrival in Tulsa, Frank put his degree to good use, going to work for PSO where he would work until his retirement in 1985. At that time, Frank was serving as a board member and the company's Vice President of Corporate Planning and Director of Research and Development.

Retirement didn't slow Frank down much, though. In 1990, he organized and co-chaired the worldwide International Science and Engineering Fair hosted that year in Tulsa. Frank and Ginny also enjoyed traveling together going to national parks from coast to coast, places like Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, often taking their three children in tow with them. As a father of two, I can say that is quite an accomplishment. They also enjoyed their favorite place, and I'll try this, Zihuatanejo, in Mexico. Frank and Ginny also loved the lake, and they built a cabin on Grand Lake where they spent many weekends with their family.

This afternoon, I want to really focus on the words of fathers to sons. One of these fathers is David the King of Israel, and his words are recorded in 1 Kings Chapter 2, Verses 1-4. The other father is Frank Meyer, and his words are recorded in a letter that he wrote to his son Mike seventy years and two months ago today. I want to spend the next few moments as we remember some of Frank's life but we also gather some valuable lessons from his life and from the word of God as we look at these words of fathers to their sons.

First, these are the words of David. "Now the days of David drew near that he should die and he charged Solomon, his son, saying, 'I go the way of all the earth. Be strong therefore and prove yourself a man and keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies as is written in the law of Moses that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, that the Lord may fulfill his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take heed to their way to walk

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before me in truth with all their heart, with all their soul,' he said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'"

Let's go to the Lord once again. Father, again, we thank you for your word and we pray, Holy Spirit, that you administer to us through your word. Lord, open our eyes, give us ears to hear, and a heart that is receptive to what you would say to us this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

At the end of David's life, the great king of Israel passed on to his son Solomon some parting instructions. There's something I think is very, very significant about a man's final instructions to his son. These would be perhaps the greatest lessons of his life. They're condensed into but a few words. They are absolutely the most important things that a man knew. David did this with his son. It was apparently something his son valued deeply because he passed on great amounts of wisdom to his children throughout their lives. Much of that is recorded in the Book of Proverbs for our benefit.

When I read the letter that Frank Meyer had written to his son, it immediately caused me to consider what he wrote and the things that David and Solomon had written as well. The letter that Frank wrote reflected his character. It reflected many of his hopes and it reflected his faith. The words of a man who chose to share with his son, they are the words that he chose to share with his son when faced with the possibility that he may never get to share them face-to-face. Frank wrote this letter as he was preparing to head to Europe during the midst of World War II. These are the things that Frank considered most important. As I considered his words, it was with great joy that I recognized that they are in many ways very consistent with the words that David had shared with his son Solomon.

With that thought in mind, you may ask this question, what do the thoughts of a man seventy years ago have to do with what he might say to us or what he might think today were he here to share with us? I think that is a good and a fair question because we do all change over time. But what we become is shaped by what we think. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As he thinks, so is he." In Matthew 12:34, Jesus tells us, "It's out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks."

What I'm saying is, yes, we do change over time and I'm sure Frank changed much after writing this letter, but the letter contains the overflow of his heart and it shows us the core values that made him what he became. He did change in many ways over his life, but there were those things that were consistent throughout his life, and I hope that we can learn and benefit from those things today. If you will let me encourage you from the word of God and from this letter from Frank, and if you will heed the wisdom contained in them, then out of this moment of sorrow can come a joy that will be eternal. In the words of scripture which say, "We know all things work together for good. For those who love God and are called according to his purpose, those words will be true for you."

Now as I've become familiar with the life of Frank Meyer, one thing I would have to say about him is he did things the right way. He did things properly. He was a man who was

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proper. We live in a world where people don't do the proper thing anymore, so I think there are some great values we examine his life. Let's learn from the word of God and from the life of Frank a little bit about proper living. Now there are three things I want to share with you as we do this. First, I want you to notice from the letter that Frank wrote to his son.

It says this, "September 17, 1944. My son, when I write this letter, I have never seen you or heard you cry. You will never remember this day or perhaps this war. Your father was in the army when you were born. Your father and your mother were married during the war and as chance would have it, could not be together when you were born. Your mother was not alone. Her mother and brothers were there to try and take your father's place. This sounds as though things were tough on your father and mother during those times. Actually, they were luckier than many others. Your father was still training and didn't expect to have to fight for some time to come. I tell you this so that you will know why I write this letter."

I want to share with you, if I can, a little bit of wisdom from this letter and from the words that David shared with his son. The first thing I want you to notice is that there was a proper perspective. Both Frank and David had a proper perspective on life, and there are three parts to having a proper perspective on life that we would do well to remember as well. The first thing they recognized was the brevity of life. Frank recognized that we do not know what tomorrow holds. Life is filled with uncertainties, and because of this we need to make sure we take the time now to communicate the most important things in life to the most important people in life. Whether our life is eight years or eighty years, when it ends, it will have seemed like only a moment.

Our time on this earth is like a vapor in the wind. David told his son, "I go the way of all the earth." We will go that way also. Scripture is clear that it's appointed a man to die once and then the judgment. David told his son that he goes the way of all the earth. We would do well to remember the brevity of life and to redeem the time that we have to make the most of it by loving others and loving the Lord. Those are the things that will survive our brief life and carry us into eternity. Those are the things about Frank's life that we hold onto today, in the way he lived his life and the way he loved his family.

We need to remember as we have a proper perspective on life that there is the brevity of life, but also we notice the blessings of life. Frank also recognized that despite difficulties and despite the adversities he faced that God had blessed him in many ways. He didn't take the time to dwell on the unfairness of a young man in his prime having to give up time with his family and potentially his life. He chose instead to recognize the goodness of the Lord. While the days were not easy for Frank and Ginny, he knew that it could have been much worse.

Friends and family, I know how deeply you hurt today. I know that you feel great loss, and you should; it is fitting. Also remember how blessed you are, how blessed you are to have a man in your life that you could miss so much. The heartache that you feel is, in fact, a reminder of how blessed you were. Mike and Stacey and Steve, you are truly blessed to have a

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father that loved you so much. I enjoyed hearing that he took time to establish holiday traditions. Traditions are good things that we can hang our hats on. It gives us a sense of stability in life in a world that seems so unstable. He did those things with you.

How blessed you were, Stacey, to have a father who enjoyed shopping with you. I think what a good father who could go shopping. Stacey said he could make about anything. I really enjoyed that you shared with me how once you were in a play and you came home and told your father about it and he made bunny ears for you to wear in that play. As you remember today, I know that your heart is deep, but there is also that great blessing to have somebody who loved you that way.

To the grandchildren, the times that you got to share maybe playing games. I really enjoyed the fact that he would take you down to Coney Island for a hot dog. Those are blessed times that we get to do that.

Frank knew those things, so we do well to remember the brevity of life. We do well to remember the blessings of life. Let me share with you one other thing we have in a proper perspective. Frank also knew the big things in life. He knew the things that mattered most. As I studied his life, I can't help but think that Frank Meyer was a brilliant man. He was an accomplished man, and obviously, he had to be a hard-working man, but it wasn't his work and personal accomplishments that were most important to him. He knew what the biggest things in life really were. I think you can get a hint at what was most important to him through the words in his letter.

Now listen to this. He said, "My son, always look after your mother. She is the best sport in all the world. Remember your mother, son. Watch over her and keep her." You see, I think Frank's most valued possessions were the people in his life, and he wanted to teach that to his son and he wanted his son to remember that through his life. I think he would want us to remember that today, too.

Frank continued to value people throughout his life. It wasn't just something that a twenty-four-year-old wrote as he was preparing for war. He held that value throughout his life. That was evident by the work he did to host the International Science Fair, but it was also evident in the way he lived his life daily. Even while enjoying getaways to the lake with his family, Frank took time to teach other children how to water ski. He was a generous man. He was generous in the way he lived his life, in the way that he used his time. Frank knew what the biggest things in life were. One statement he made I think was very indicative of that. Here was a man who was accomplished and accomplished so much and received so many awards. But these were his words. He said his best honor was that he had kids that would still come home. Again, as a father of two daughters, I hope that I would live my life in such a way that my grown children will still enjoy coming to my house one day.

You see, Frank knew what the big things were. Frank loved his wife, his children, and his grandchildren. Again, it was evident by the way he lived. When his children were growing up,

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he took time to teach them how to fish. I like a father who would spend time with his children showing them how to do that. Also took a little bit of encouragement in this. Frank was such a brilliant man and did so much, but Stacey shared with me when he was teaching her how to fish that he actually caught her in the neck with the treble hook. Even brilliant people can make occasional mistakes, and even that became a lesson. Stacey said she learned that that's why you wear a hat when you're fly fishing. You live and you learn.

Frank knew what the big things were by the way he lived his life. It was evident. It says a lot about a man that his children couldn't wait for him to get home from work. Steve, I even got word that you guys looked forward to him coming home sometimes when you might have been in trouble. That says a lot about a man, that you would look forward to seeing him that much.

Frank also enjoyed his grandchildren. He liked to play Dominoes with them. I understand that oftentimes he said he didn't know what the game was, but somehow he could always win the game. He was a great man. Frank had the proper perspective on life. We need to remember the brevity of life, the blessings of life, and the big things in life.

Secondly, I want you to notice this. Both David and Frank, not only did they have a proper perspective on life, but they also gave their children proper principles for living. David gave Solomon proper principles to live by when he said, "Keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, his testimonies as is written in the law of Moses that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." Frank gave his son and now some of us some principles to live by as well.

Listen to his words recorded in the letter. "As you go through life, you will find many places where you think you're having a good time. Good times are never nice to look back on when they're at the expense of others. Your father, when young, was somewhat of a smart kid and as such, thought that he could get away with some rather smart tricks, but you can't beat what is good and right. Your greatest pleasure in life can easily be obtained by doing for others. Be friendly with all you meet and do your best to help them. You may have your own troubles, but others' troubles are just as important to them. When others try to hurt you, simply forget it and do them a favor. They will be ashamed of themselves for trying to hurt you."

What words of wisdom from a young man, and they're right in line with the words of scripture and that's why they are so wise. Treat others right. Forgive others of their wrongs. How important it is for us to remember to forgive. We are most like our Lord and Savior when we forgive. Frank encouraged his son, and I encourage you, too, that we need to remember to forgive not just those who are good to us but even those who dislike us. Our Lord and Savior would remind us that he gave his life as a ransom for us not because of our goodness.

Scripture tells us that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. Christ died for us while we were the enemies of God, separated from God. We would do well to emulate our Lord and Savior by being gracious even to those who are not gracious to us. Frank was a

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gracious man. I can't remember how many times people mentioned graciousness in his life. We would do well, family, and you would honor him by having that graciousness in your life. He taught his family to treat others right. He taught us to forgive others of their wrongdoings. He also taught his son to serve others by giving your best.

Frank didn't just leave him with principles, but he also left his family and those that knew him, a pattern for living that life. Frank was described by many people as a man of integrity. Oh, how we need men of integrity in the world today. It wasn't just an integrity, family, in the way that he lived in making right choices, but a degree of integrity that Stacey said he was described as a man who could not turn away from wrong. You see, we need to live our lives in a way that reflects integrity and that also our integrity is shown in the way that we intervene in others' lives and we shouldn't turn our back on the things that are evil in this world. That's what Frank did. He would do what was right even if it was costly, not turning away from things that were wrong.

Frank also gave us this sound advice when we talk about a pattern for living. He said whatever you choose to do in life, do it with your whole heart and all your energy. If your heart's not in the job, get something else. Where your heart is, there you will find your treasures. How appropriate that is. We ought to live our lives in a way giving all that we have, scripture says, "to the glory of God." Where our heart is, yes, indeed, our treasure will be there also.

Frank encouraged those around him to give their best. I really like some advice that he gave to Stacey as she was in school struggling in a class. Stacey shared with me that she was concerned about that. What a good father that just told her, "Keep giving your best. You're probably doing fine." It turned out that she was doing fine; in fact, doing much better than others. What a lesson for us to give our best. Also just to encourage others in giving their best. What more can we do than to give our best? Let me encourage you in this. When we give our best, make sure that you're giving your best to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Frank gave them a pattern for living, of treating others right, forgiving others' wrongs, serving others by giving their best. He also left these words as a principle and a pattern. He said, "Study the Bible, my boy." You know, there's a whole world that does not think that the Bible is relevant anymore today. Let me share with you that this is the word of the living God. It was relevant three thousand years ago. It will be relevant through all of eternity. Frank was wise when he said to study the Bible. He said, "In it you will find a wealth of advice." He also said, "Pray that you will remember and heed its counsel and your life will be full and happy." Let me share with you also, the Bible is still relevant today and God still hears our prayers. Family, if you will call upon the name of the Lord, he will hear your prayers today.

Let me conclude with you by sharing this. Frank not only gave a proper perspective for life, not only did he have a proper pattern for living, Steve, Stacey, and Mike, he had a proper prayer. I just love this. Frank concluded his letter to Mike with these words, "May the grace of

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our Lord be with you now and forevermore." Friends and family, let me share with you that we are saved only by God's grace. It's not by works of righteousness but by his mercy that he has saved us. Christ died for us providing us the opportunity to spend eternity with him and to be reunited with our loved ones. You have an opportunity to see Frank again, to share eternity with him if you'll receive the grace of God.

Let me encourage you with this, too. I'm so glad that we're saved by God's grace because I could never earn my way to heaven anyhow. I make too many mistakes. But I'm glad we're saved by God's grace. Not only are we saved by his grace. Let me share this good news with you. We are kept saved by his grace. Paul said in the letter to the Romans, "It is this grace in which we stand continually before the throne of God." You say, Brother Randy, what if I sin? Scripture says, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more." Our Lord died once for all of our sins.

Friends and family, if you'll accept the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, his sacrificial death for you, then I can assure you you'll stand in that grace and you have the blessed hope of seeing Frank again and spending eternity with him. That would be something I'm sure that would bring a smile to his face. Now I'll conclude with these words again. May the grace of our Lord be with you now and forevermore.

Father, we thank you again for the life of Frank Meyer, Lord, but we also thank you for the great grace that allows that this moment might not be the end but the beginning for us and we have the hope of being with him again today. I pray your Holy Spirit would comfort the family with these thoughts. In Jesus' name, Amen.