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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
September 10, 2014
Lincoln Cole Funeral

Scripture Lessons: 1Peter 1:3-9; John 14:1-6, 1 John 4:7-19 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Psalm 91 responsive reading
Hymns: 744; 245; 777; 200:1,5,7,8

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 John 4:9-12

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends and especially family of Lincoln Cole, his loved ones, fellow Redeemed in Christ Jesus,

INTRO: Understanding love.

Lincoln possessed a marvelously complex personality in this life. He was so full of energy. He also had his obsessions that some of us enjoyed, and about which he was teased a little from time to time. He was a hardy man, an outdoorsman to be sure, but Lincoln was also a man full of love. He loved his friends, he loved his family even more, and he loved his Savior even more than that. Today as we mourn our loss we celebrate --

THEME: God's Love in Lincoln's Life.

I. God's Love Is Revealed in Christ

The love in Lincoln's heart was not the product of natural affections. It was the product of the Holy Spirit. It came to him from God. The love in his heart, all the different loves, for friends, for family, for Savior, all came from the love of Christ. This is where the words of our text will help direct our thoughts this morning for we will be reminded that this is not about praising Lincoln, but rather it is about praising and thanking God for the love that filled Lincoln's heart. You see it started with God.

1 John 4:9-10 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

It is not that we loved God, and so it was just right and natural that God should love us back. By nature we were God's enemies. We read in --

Romans 8:7-8 "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

That is the way it was and is. It is impossible for us to ingratiate ourselves to God and make ourselves so nice that He just has to love us. We are rebellious and contrary, and don't want to do all the things God tells us to do in our lives. We want to live our lives the way we want to live, and God just better like it because that's the way it's going to be. That is our natural attitude, whether we are ready to admit it or not. We are sinners all. That all includes everybody. So often we are reticent to speak ill of the dead. That's not good form. But Lincoln was a sinner too, just like the rest of us, and the Lord is clear about that.

Psalms 14:2-3 The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. 3 They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

So we are not gathered here to praise Lincoln for having successfully won over God with all the fine things Lincoln did. That is not that way it was for Lincoln. That is not the way it is for any of us.

We are here to thank God for His love. He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Jesus was and is the incarnate Son of God, who came down to earth to be our brother that He might bear the

curse of the law, the curse of our sin for us. None of us deserved that gift of grace, but there it is for all of us. While we were still sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). That is the love that God revealed to us all, the love that God revealed to Lincoln Cole, and which, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Lincoln Cole treasured in His heart.

God did this with purpose. God's purpose was that we might live through Him. That is God's will for us all, that we might repent of our sinful ways and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and possess life in Jesus' name. The other day Lincoln's family and I shared the words Jesus spoke upon the death of one of Jesus' friends. He said:

John 10:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

This is the truth that we observe today for Lincoln Cole as well as for all who believe in Jesus and know Him as Lord and Savior. **We have life in His name.** Lincoln has life in Jesus' name because the love of God was poured out into this world for our salvation, because the love of God was poured out into Lincoln Cole, and Lincoln believed in Jesus and loved Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

II. God's Love has been Perfected in us.

That doesn't mean that we love one another as perfectly as God loves us in Christ. No, it means that God's love for us is made complete when we love one another even as God loved us in Christ.

Let's review those words from our text once more:

1 John 4:11-12 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

Faith's response to God's love that has been revealed to us in Christ is that we should love in return. But the Lord doesn't say that we should simply love God and whatever happens between us humans just happens. If we happen to love someone fine, if we don't love someone else that's fine too. No, no, no. God would direct faith's response to be loving toward others. If we don't love someone else that is sin. If we don't love those whom we can see how can we say that we love Him whom we can't see. So John writes a little later in this chapter.

1 John 4:20-21 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

This is the love which God poured into Lincoln Coles heart, and which was evident in the way he loved friends, family and others as well. Some may say that if I think Lincoln was perfect in this I didn't know Lincoln. I knew Lincoln, and I know that none of us is perfect in this. But this was an evident fruit of faith in Lincoln's life. He loved even as God loved him. He loved his Lord most of all, and thanked and praised his Lord for the many blessings in his life. Lincoln counted friends and family and neighbors among those blessings of the Lord and he loved. And so the love of God was perfected in Lincoln's life. Again that is not to say that Lincoln was perfect in loving others. He had a temper too, just like we all do. He sinned just like we all do, but he knew forgiveness in Christ, and he forgave and he loved. Those who knew Lincoln and saw this love knew that it came to him from above, that the love of God was poured out onto Lincoln's heart, and that it was the love of God that was overflowing from Lincoln to those around him.

Lincoln's life was a testimony to the truth of God's love, and that was right up to the last days of life, when he asked me about my daughter's well-being and expressed his loving concern for her rather than expressing concern for himself. Lincoln loved the Lord his Savior, and the testimony to the truth of God's salvation was evident in his life every day. No one has seen God at any time, but knowing Lincoln, you saw God's love. And now Lincoln is there with Lord where he lives in the glory of the Lord to the praise and glory of his Savior, and ours.

May the love of God so abound in our hearts that we also may have life in His name.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.