

Pastor Walter Remembers Rick Miles

I have been reading Edith Miles' account of their son Rick's death on the back of the church bulletin over the past four weeks. Oh what a flood of memories poured through my mind as I recalled that Sunday and the days that followed. I remember how traumatized Mark was as he told what happened while they were snowmobiling. As near as I can recall his words: Rick just grabbed his head and said, my head hurts, and then he just fell down. The next day as I walked into the hospital I saw a scene that has remained indelibly printed in my mind. There lay Rick's cold body on life support and Dick and Edith feeling a pain that only those who have suddenly lost a loved one can possibly understand. We knew Rick was not in that body. Our sovereign God who does all things well had taken Rick home.

The day of Rick's funeral service was also a day that stands out in my mind. I have conducted or spoken at hundreds of funerals and Memorial Services over the past 60 years, none of them are easy. Death is an ugly thing, but there are some that are more difficult than others.

I spoke of them in my book, *50 Years A Country Pastor*. They are the times that are totally unexpected and unprepared for and leave us with the unanswered question - WHY? Why did Alice, a five year old get spinal meningitis and die within two days? Why all those car wrecks that took the lives of all those young people?

I have conducted 13 funerals with those killed in car accidents, nine of them were teenagers. Why, those most of us older members of Christ's body at South Apalachin loved and remembered well, were taken from us suddenly, such as Barney, Vicky, Joy, Ray, and Sarah to name a few? Rick was one of those.

All that week I meditated and prayed about what to say at Rick's Memorial Service. Then I received the answer when Dick and Edith gave me a recording of Rick's favorite song to be sung at his Memorial Service. I had never heard the song before. It was the song that gave the Gaithers their start in Christian music.

The song - *BECAUSE HE LIVES*.

GOD SENT HIS SON, THEY CALLED HIM JESUS
HE CAME TO LOVE, HEAL AND FORGIVE
HE LIVED AND DIED TO BUY MY PARDON
AN EMPTY GRAVE IS THERE TO PROVE MY SAVIOUR LIVES
BECAUSE HE LIVES I CAN FACE TOMORROW

BECAUSE HE LIVES, ALL FEAR IS GONE
BECAUSE I KNOW HE HOLDS THE FUTURE
AND LIFE IS WORTH THE LIVING JUST BECAUSE HE LIVES

When I heard the words of that song so many Scriptures went through my mind, all of them about the Living, Resurrected, Ascended, Coming Again Son of God. It was then that I knew what I would preach. I would just quote those verses and passages of Scripture with a few comments and let the Holy Spirit speak the words of comfort and hope to all those present in whom He lived, and words of enlightenment and conviction to those in whom He did not live.

That was nearly 40 years ago and each time I hear that song I think of the Miles family and Rick's home going. The key verse to all the verses I used that day and a 100 times since "Fear not, I am the First and the Last, I am He that Liveth and was Dead, and behold I am Alive forever more, AMEN, and have the keys of Hell and death." Rev 1:17-18