

Giles McCrary's Memorial Service – November 2, 2011

Prelude music (Old Rugged Cross – Finlandia) - Margie

We welcome you on behalf of the people of First Presbyterian Church, and Giles McCrary's family. We are grateful for his life with us, and we honor his memory with stories, songs, and scripture.

Nelda Dalby told me the other day that quite nearly the last words of Giles' father, Issac Newton McCrary, were to this effect: "Don't cry and grieve for me. I've done everything I've wanted in my life. And if I liked it, I went and did it again." I'm here to tell you the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Giles Connell McCrary did a lot. A lot of what he liked, and then went and did it again. He liked to travel. He went and did it again. He liked to give. He went and did it again. He liked to love. He loved Louise. And Mary, Pam, Giles. Molly, Michael, Issac, Trey. Nolan, Addie, Lala, Colson, Cormack. He loved. Then he went and did it again. And again. And again.

We begin by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and in Communion with the Holy Spirit. Let us pray:

Prayer: Our God of grace and glory, we remember and honor Giles today and we thank you for giving him to us to know and to love. By your compassionate presence, console us in our mourning. Inspire in us the confidence of a certain faith, the comfort of holy hope, and the peace which passes all understanding; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Remarks from Trey:

How on Earth does one begin something like this?

When I got the call in London some time between now and before the now of now, I kept saying to myself, "Is this really happening?"

It was like some sort of ghostly mantra I would repeat to shield my heart from what my head knew was the new reality.

But here we all are. Together on this gorgeous Texan afternoon, in this church I spent so many Sundays of my childhood in. Celebrating the life of a truly great Texan. I hesitate to use the word mourn in situations like this, but that's the not so funny funny thing about remembering a true giant among men. Celebrating the life and contributions of my grandfather is something that we all came to do. But with celebration of great life, we must all pause for a moment to mourn the loss of that life.

As many in this church know, growing up as a Giles isn't always easy. There are

those brilliant moments where people recognise you when you are doing good things and then the not so brilliant times when people recognise you when you're doing some not so great things. To live up to high standards, to protect the family name, to continue the good works started over a century ago. These are the things expected of all of us with the name McCrary.

And there are times, such as today, when you think you will never be able to live up to the pedigree of that name. As I look around this room, it is clear his name means so much to so many.

Husband. Daddy, Grandfather, Great Grandfather. Employer. Educator. Friend.

All of us in this room have been touched by the man whose name I have the honour of passing down to the next generation. And if I can touch one half of one percent of the lives he did, then I guess I might be onto to something.

I have been very lucky to have all of my grandparents alive for all of my life. But death is indeed a part of this fragile construct we like to call life. And that part of life, well it hurts. It's not fair and we all want to rage against the dying of a light as bright as his.

But today, in this place, and at this hour we all can see that there is no need to thrash about tearing at our clothes with such grief. For in each and everyone of your sweet faces, I see him. In your stories I hear him. Through his good deeds we all feel him. And in this magical moment I want all of you to look to your right and now to your left. There is his light.

Can you see it? Can you all feel it? Your smiles say you can. Indeed his light is most definitely here living in every single one of us.

So, on behalf of my family and even the next Giles Connell McCrary yet to be born I want to thank all of you. I thank you for your love and true kindness you have shown us these past few days. I thank you for being a part of our story. But with this gratitude comes a simple request.

keep his light shining within you always.

Big Ol always said that whenever he saw Pope John Paul II, the room danced with an ethereal light. How very true to form that he never realised that some of that light was really only a reflection of his own.

Hotep, sweet man. Hotep.

We hope we can do you proud and I can live up to your name.

Congregational Hymn: “Amazing Grace.” (First verse).

Remarks from Malcolm

An Eternal Encounter with Two Souls

What resides deep within the human heart is revealed to the mind then into a visual form of profound action.

Now take two hearts, than have become one, that has changed the lives of a multitude of other souls – literally calling them to change and become even more – Louise and Giles are inseparable to this very moment.

My bond with them of over 39 years has significantly remolded my life and redirected my life as they have many others. I was infused even through their silence, learning the true meaning of the values of others. Accepting and respecting each individual for who they are, Giles taught me the meaning of compassion. When looking into the tearful eyes of Giles, I not only felt compassion, but the need for universal compassion.

Giles would say, “I am a people person, I like to watch people.” He didn’t watch people; he studied them!

Their compassion, for some, was misread, emotions seen as weakness, frailty, when in reality it was pure strength.

Each of our cornerstones in life lies on its significant others who have touched us. Rather parents, spouse, children, or friends, they change us into who we really are.

Where did Giles’ compassion come from? Deep inside of a foxhole in Germany during World War II on a frigid cold Christmas Eve night, lying upon his fallen soldiers, only 50 yards from the German line. They were to liberate one of the concentration camps. “A clear cold night, suddenly the softness of snow flakes slowly began to fall, the few remaining of my 63rd Infantry Division began singing ‘Silent Night,’ (and) across the plain the Germans began singing ‘Silent Night’ along with us.” His inner life changed, and hence we have each experienced that compassionate care and his self-giving.

From that time on he sought to balance the profane with the sacred. He found the sacred in music and art. He never purchased a piece of art for what it was made of, or its cost, but for the person who created it, that individual’s attempt to manifest the beauty of their faith, and the gifts that God has so freely given to them.

When not in my clerical garb, he would say, “You’re out of uniform.” That was

his way of saying, "Remember who you must be for others."

The strength, inner strength he told me many times, even in far away places, "is unconditional love," he said, "I have come to believe the pain and sufferings of others cannot but affect me deeply. I pray it always will."

On another cold night on the deck of a ship, I shared with him my pain. He said, "Jerry, my pastor, read a verse from the Old Testament the Sunday before we left. 'As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another, ' (Proverbs 27:17)."

We have all been sharpened for the tasks that lie before us, because he and Louise have been a part of us.

Louise, Mary, Giles Jr., Molly, and family, with the strength of iron that is molded into Damascus steel, I pledge to be always present to each of you.

Scripture readings – Elizabeth

Psalm 121

**I lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?
My help cometh from the Lord, who made the heavens and the earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The Lord will watch over your going out and your coming in
from this time forth and for evermore.**

Psalm 23

**The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still
waters. He restoreth my soul.
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake
Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.
Thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

John 14:1-3.

**Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my
Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so would I have told you that I
go and prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I
will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also.**

About Giles – Elizabeth

We meet today as family and friends to remember and to celebrate the grand and full life of Giles McCrary, who missed celebrating his 92nd birthday by just six days! Giles truly loved life and always wanted to live to be 100 and while he may be negotiating with God, as we speak, for more time, Giles was indeed a faithful steward of the time he was given on this earth and we are all the richer because our lives have been filled with his joy, his dry wit, and his unrestrained generosity! While we know that Giles has not been able to go to his office or travel the world now for awhile, we were not at all ready to give this gentle, fun-loving, bull-headed and compassionate man back to you so suddenly on Sunday. We are grateful that Giles did not have to linger and be incapacitated any more by his worn-out and well-used body and it is comforting that he has left us with such a legacy of life and faith!

Giles loved adventure and sought out bold undertakings his whole life long! Giles was born in 1919, about the time Robert Frost wrote the poem, The Road not Taken, and the words in this poem exemplified the internal, curious compass that guided Giles throughout his life: “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and so sorry I could not travel both. But I took the one less travelled, and that has made all the difference!” Whether Giles found himself on the front lines as a soldier fighting in WWII, spending the night in his car bringing in an oil well, travelling to an obscure village in Africa to meet with a tribal head hunter, or listening to his police scanner in his home 24/7, Giles was excited about life and always ready to go and to help!

While Giles was extremely grateful for his lot in life and never took it for granted, it was not in his nature to be content with what he had accomplished or to sit on the sidelines and be an observer. Rather, Giles took what he had been given, wisely invested his time, energies, money, passions, opinions and talents and truly had great fun making more so that he then might give more to improve and bless the life in his midst! We will never, ever know the number of college and seminary scholarships, new businesses, hospital and utility bills, large charitable donations to hospitals, non-profits and universities, endowed funds and chairs at Texas Tech and it’s medical school, or the many unknown avenues this unpredictable, life-filled man used to enhance the well-being of others!

Giles loved people; Giles loved to be with people and he loved to watch people! Giles had a wonderful sense of humor and a dry wit that sometimes may have taken you a few days to fully figure out! Janie Lopez has been Giles’ personal assistant for the last 25 years and she said that he was a real prankster! Janie said whenever Giles returned to the office from one of his world travels to show off his tanned body or unusual treasures, the women in the office would watch for him and when he was close, they would shut off the lights and lock the door and Giles would have to get out his key and let himself in, turn the lights on and declare, “Well, I see you are all still doing nothing around here!!”

Finally, Giles loved Louise! Giles and Louise grew up in the same Fort Worth neighborhood and had fun skating and taking dance lessons with each other when they were young. They have been married for 72 years and sweethearts all of their lives! Their relationship brought out the best in the other and through the highs and lows and ordinary in between times, they gave each other much security, love and light-heartedness in their life together. Giles truly adored Louise and enjoyed shopping for her and bringing her clothes, trinkets and presents. While Giles was a man of the world and marched to the beat of his own drum, Louise was the one person in his life that could change his plans or lay down the law with him! When Louise told him not to bring back to their already full home any more treasures from his trips, Giles decided to open the museum so Louise would be happy and he would have a place to house his stuff! Giles always said he was more of a packrat than a museum curator!

Giles great love of adventure, people and life, his wonderful sense of humor and mischievous ways, his passion for giving and leaving this a better world than he found it, and his genuine care of family and friends have truly influenced our lives, our faith and our deep well-being. Even though Giles always planned to live to 100, I think he would be honored that God allowed him to die on All Saint's Sunday. All Saints' Sunday is the day the Christian church celebrates all those who have gone before us and the reality that somehow in God's mystery, they are never lost to us fully, that their love and their inspiration continues to be a presence in our lives.

Saints, Frederick Buechner writes are not "plaster statues, men and women of such paralyzing virtue that they never thought a nasty thought or did an evil thing their whole life long. Saints are essentially life givers and to be with them is to become more fully alive." (Wishful Thinking, p. 102).

We are all truly more alive and more whole because of Giles' gracious presence and lively embrace! Thanks be to you O, God, for the many ways Giles McCrary will continue to bless us, encourage us, pester us and bring us smiles, affirmation and great joy! Amen

Lord's Prayer - All

Musical Interlude – "Simple Gifts."

Scripture and sermon -- Sermon -- Jerry

From Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 23: 1-3, 11-12: "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice. ... He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whosoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.'"

Giles sent me a postcard awhile back when, at age 83, he was travelling on a cruise ship in and around Norway. He'd seen a remarkable Lutheran Church and told me some about it. At the end, he also said this, "You might enjoy fellow passengers. Harvard and UCLA profs. Not much fun – stuffy. Most others, too old." Too old. Giles at 83.

I took this with all the good humor he intended, but also to heart. "Not much fun – stuffy." In other words, "He who exalts himself will be humbled." Fair warning. Good advice.

Giles McCrary loved a good laugh. Even better, a good laugh at himself. And he detested pretense. Though if ever a man was entitled to a little. I never saw the slightest hint of it. Not much fun. Stuffy.

He's received so many awards, accolades, and honors over the years, I've lost track of the details. What I remember most was a recurring conversation he and I used to have, this nearly verbatim, every time he made some news. Me: "There's a vicious rumor going around you did a good thing." Him: "Can't be." Me: "Congratulations." Him: (often quietly, sometimes with tears welling up), "I've been very fortunate."

The implication was abundantly clear to me, every time. What would you expect from someone who knew he was so richly blessed. The things for which he was honored were, to him, simple expressions of humble thanks. "I've been very fortunate."

All of this is not to say that being very fortunate meant the absence of misfortune. He never got over losing Pam. No one ever does. And then there was WWII. He rejected what would have been an automatic opportunity for officer's training, choosing rather to go in as a draftee like everyone else. Pfc. McCrary was on the ground in Germany a few months ahead of the Allied Forces of Liberation. He never talked about it at all unless prompted, and then never much, or for long. "For he who exalts himself will be humbled. "

There was one time – having nothing to do with the Army - when it seemed he let that Bible verse go the other way. I was visiting with him in the hospital - just the two of us, and I was about to leave. The Charge Nurse came in to tend to something. He didn't seem to know her or recognize her name. And before she did anything, she said, "Mr. McCrary, I'm (and I've forgotten her name, too). I went to college and finished nursing school on a McCrary-Franklin Scholarship. I'm only here because of you." Pretty soon everyone had teared up. "And he who humbled himself was exalted."

She was very fortunate. And so are we. The details of our own educational and material and social fortunes are unique to each of us. But we all share one thing. Everyone here has been fortunate enough to live most or all of our lives in Post

with Giles McCrary among us. Now we have to go on without him.

How will we manage? That's a good question.

Another recurring conversation I would have with Giles, verbatim like this nearly every time we parted company. Especially so when I was about to go on vacation, a research trip, or often as not just heading back to Lubbock. Him: "Will you do me a favor?" Me: "Sure." "Will you have a good time?" "I will." Him: "Can I count on you?"

"How will we manage?" remains a good question. We address it one day at a time by answering an even better question, the question to all of us from Giles himself: "Can I count on you?"

Let us pray.

Into your hands O merciful Savior we commend Giles, your servant. Acknowledge him we pray, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of all the saints in light. Amen.

Congregational Hymn: "Silent Night." (First verse).

Benediction: To Honor Giles, - Go into the world in peace. Have courage. Hold onto what is good. Return to no-one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering. Honor all people. Speak and act with love on your lips and in your heart. Be generous. Be humble. Have a good time. He's counting on us. Amen

Let us go in Peace.

Postlude music -- Margie