

Rev. Ronald "Ron" Harold Parrish (Memorial Service sermonaudio.com
Sermon)

Funeral/Memorial Service
By Terry L. Johnson

Preached on: Friday, January 29, 2021

The Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah
207 Bull Street
Savannah, GA 31401

Website: ipcsav.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/ipcsav

That you would give us understanding now as we open your word. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

My text for this message is from Matthew 25. This is the parable of the talents in which Jesus commends two of those to whom he has distributed funds, and one of whom he does not commend. Those that have multiplied the talents, he says to them these words found in verse 21 and again in verse 23, "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.'" And then again, "Enter into the joy of your master." Good and faithful servant, that's what comes to mind when I think about Ron. Ron was not flashy, he was not self-promoting, he wasn't attention-seeking, but he was good and faithful. I think he embodies that. I think his life is a good illustration that will help us understand what Jesus is commending.

The loss of Ron is a blow to our church, certainly an even greater blow to Donna, his beloved wife of 41 years, a blow to his children and his grandchildren, a blow to me, a blow to our congregation which he has served for 25 years. And he was only 69 years old. That's what we say these days about somebody who dies when they're 69, that it's only 69, and it came as a considerable shock to us. Even though Ron had been very sick for an extended period of time, the trajectory of his condition was positive, and so he had every expectation that he was going to recover. He had fought hard and long. He was making progress. So the timing of it is what has shocked us because it seemed to be a complete reversal of what we were led to believe was going to happen. And it often is the case that the timing of death, the timing of tragedies is what is particularly upsetting to us.

We have an example of this going back to Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus. Mary and Martha both raised the issue of timing. And years ago, we had one of those funeral services in which there was an untimeliness about the death, and I talked to Ron about it and I said, "Ron, you know, what do I do? What do I say?" And he, sure enough, as he was just so very capable of doing, he pulled like an 18th century theologian off the shelf and directed me to a sermon on Lazarus and the language of Martha and Mary where they say to Jesus, "Lord, if you have been here, my brother would not have died." You see the point,

it's a matter of bad timing. "Where were you? Why weren't you here? Why did you allow that to happen? Why did you not intervene? If you had been here at the right time, then this need not have taken place."

And so that's the kind of question that we are asking ourselves at this time, and when you combine this with just 12 months ago, Amy Martin died and the two of them together represent in many ways the heart and soul of our congregation. There is an untimeliness about it and I've heard some of the young people who have grown up in our church who will be the Mr. Ron and the Miss Amy for our children, for the next generation, and God will raise up replacements, as it were, but they are, in another sense, irreplaceable for us. It was a wonderful thing to grow up in this church with Mr. Ron and Miss Amy and Frankie's still alive and kicking but Mr. Frankie too. You know, the great great gifts that they had, they brought to our church. It was a privilege to be a part of a congregation, Amy and Ron together, 45 years a part of the staff of the church between the two of them. So what a great thing to grow up in that context, and what a great thing it is to belong to a living, vital, Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church.

So let's look, then, at what makes for a good and faithful servant to whom Jesus says, "Well done." So I have a couple of things to say about that. 1. Ron was devout. A good and faithful servant is going to be devout. Ron was a man of God. He was consumed with the things of God. His great loves were the word of God and the people of God and the worship of God. He had other interests, true enough, difficult as it was for me to understand some of them like University of Georgia football, but there you go, there's a lot of such around here. That was a certain passion of his. He also had a certain passion for gadgets. We took a lot of trips together, Ron and I, and you'll hear more about that in a moment, but every time we went on another trip, it seemed, Ron had another new gadget, the latest and the greatest that technology was offering. He had other interests but if you were to ask him, "What are you reading? What are you discussing? What are you thinking about?" He was occupied with the things of God.

He had a few loves in his life: Donna, his children, his grandchildren, the Lord and his church. And that was about it. He was a voracious reader, by the way. That's why he was able to pull a sermon on John 11 and Lazarus, you know, from memory off of the shelf. He was a voracious reader, especially in the areas of theology and Bible. Ron was converted as a young man, sensed a call to the ministry and so he attended Belhaven College and then graduated from Reformed Seminary in Jackson, MS. He served four different PCA churches and then he settled here for 25 years. So who hears the words "good and faithful servant"? Well, it's got to be somebody who's devout, who's occupied and passionate about the things of God, and Ron was all of that.

2. Ron was a team player. He was not out for himself. He was not directing attention to himself. Churches have problems, maybe you're not aware of that but churches do have problems. The Apostle Paul had his Alexander the copper-smith who he complains about twice. The Apostle John had his Diotrephes who loved to be preminent. In a multi-staffed church, it's inevitable that there will be rivalry and division. Very disappointing when that happens but it's a commonplace, it's distressingly common for there to be

disunity for members of the staff to be gathering supporters around themselves and building loyalty toward themselves rather than to Christ and Christ's church. So Ron was a team player. He was loyal to a fault. Any sowers of discord who went to Ron did not receive a sympathetic ear or an affirming voice, rather the contrary. He was loyal to a fault.

This may seem remarkable to you because it seems remarkable to me because I just began to reflect on it since Monday, but we served together for 25 years. I do not recall a cross word between the two of us. Not once. I cannot recall a raised voice or any expression of disrespect toward each other. I think that was because there was a mutual respect and so we always spoke to each other with respect.

He's a team player. He was eager to serve where and when he was needed, so that meant for years we needed him to do administration. He did not like administration but it needed to be done, and it was in his nature to fret about administration and making sure that everything was taken care of. Emily likes to say that I don't worry about anything because I had Ron and her to worry about everything. So what I learned to do over time was, you know, we would go on trips and many, many trips, and we went to Twin Lakes Fellowship for nearly 20 years, and then general assemblies for 30 years, and what I learned to do was I would say, "Ron, pick me up to go to the airport at 6:30." He'd say, "Okay." So at 6:20 he would arrive tapping his toe, impatient for me to get in the car, and I learned that all I had to do was have my bag and sit in the car, everything was handled. He had all the details. He'd fretted about everything so he had arranged for, you know, if we were renting a car, he handled that, if we were driving, he insisted on doing all of the driving, he'd have the directions with him, he knew exactly where he was going, he had reserved the hotel. He just handled all the details and he was eager to serve. He loved to serve.

Ron was a team player, was a gifted pastor. I guess if you want to see it this way, I don't know but if my emphasis was the preaching, his was the pastoring, and to see Ron in action pastorally was a great privilege, and this was not typical all through the years but in the last few years I would go with him on some of these pastoral calls and to watch him at bedside, to watch him with a shut-in, to watch him at the hospital, to watch him how he walked into the room and grabbed ahold of the hand and brought good cheer and light into the room, and read the scriptures and prayed. It was really quite a wonder to behold and I admired him for that, and if you've been reading some of the stuff that's posted online, the tributes that are pouring in are in regard to that, the gentle, pastoral touch that he displayed, the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He brought that into the room and I had some experience of that firsthand when my father died back in 2009, Dennis Boatwright and Ron came, flew out to California to be with our family, and there was just a calming effect, a certain calming effect that he just had just by being there.

And I know that throughout our congregation people have experienced this. Ron was a gifted pastor. He was doing what he knew best and did best, and yet willing to serve in any way that he could. I think that there was a complementary relationship on the staff of the church. Donna and I on occasion have compared notes because I knew he handled all

the details for her, just like he handled all the details for me. So we compared notes on occasion. So I asked, "Donna, when you are with Ron somewhere, is he always walking like 10 feet in front of you?" You know, and he walked kind of slew-foot at an extraordinary pace. I think he could have won an Olympic competition for walking, but walking always, Ron walked, "There's two of us on this entire street, why are you 10 paces in front of me? Will you please slow down?" And I'm like King Asa, I've got diseased feet. I can hardly walk as it is, but always, always racing to the next place.

So, "Yes, yes," she said, "yeah, yeah, that's exactly what he does. That's what he does." Then I asked, "And when you're driving and you're like one block from the destination and it's 106 degrees outside, does he turn off the air conditioner," presumably because he's afraid he might forget to turn it off before he turns off the ignition. I can't tell you how many times we came around the corner to about right there and Ron would click off the air conditioner and we would drive, turn onto the lane into the parking lot. He would then always back in, got it parked. We were just dripping with perspiration. If I ever did raise my voice, it was over something trivial like that, like, "Ron, keep the AC on! We need..." So Donna, "Yeah, that's, that's what he does."

But, like I say, he is complementary. He handled things. He, you know, he fixed the tea every day. He seemed to love to do that and I'll tell you what, already he's proven to be irreplaceable in that regard. He gave me little signs, in fact. I'm insisting on reading these to you. Sidney Smith from the 19th century, "I am glad I was not before tea." How about another one, another 19th century figure, "Tea, though ridiculed by those who are naturally coarse in their nervous sensibilities, will always be the favorite beverage of the intellectual." One more, this is from the movie "84 Charring Cross Road": "What would we do without our cups of tea? Life would be unsupportable." I don't see many of you signaling a witness to those statements but the tea lovers amongst us will quickly, will understand.

So Ron handled all the details so it's kind of interesting that his last words to Donna, he was in a state of confusion, this is the night before he passed away, his last words were, "Donna, you've gotta help us. Terry and I are at the airport and we can't find the gate." Dutifully making sure that we got where we needed to go and taking care of business. It makes me think that some of those trips were traumatic for him, and so that's where he went. There was a time when my L4-L5 disk blew up and he had to nurse me all the way back to Savannah. I mean, nurse me. I was doped up to oblivion and could hardly get out of the hotel, and into the car, and off to the airport, and into the plane, and out of the plane, and into Emily's car, and then he sat me down and he said, "He's all yours."

He's a team player and so there was camaraderie on the staff of the church. I don't know if you know, Ron has a tremendous sense of humor and a very quick wit, and you were pretty serious about what we do on Sundays but there's a lot of laughter when the pastors and directors get together. A couple of examples of the quick wit. You know, we had a missions conference here and Curt Singleton, the Seaman's House minister, was asked to speak and he was supposed to conclude by 6:30 and it was 6:35 and it was 6:40 and it was 6:45, and so Ron is just fit to be tied and he's in the back and he stands back in the

back of the chapel where we were meeting, and he goes like this, pointing at his watch. So Curt, never to miss an opportunity, says, "Ron, is there something wrong with your watch?" And Ron said, "No, but there must be something wrong with yours."

Then I'll never forget this, one Sunday morning, this is, I think, illustrative from several points of view. On a Saturday afternoon, I had borrowed a two-storey ladder because I needed to paint the trim on the second floor windows and so that's what I did. I went up that very scary ladder and I painted. And the next day, Sunday, I saw Ron and I said, I told him, "Ron, I'm a little stiff. I was painting the second floor windows." And he just looked at me in disbelief and he said, "If I'd known you were up on the ladder, I'd been down on my knees."

So Ron was a team player. He was ready to do whatever needed to be done. He always did it with a wonderful attitude. His gifts were complementary to those of myself and the other ministers. He brought light and humor as well as depth, theological, biblical insight and depth. So that brings me back, that brings me back to the matter of timing. When I think about Amy and Ron, I think of myself as unworthy to have had these good and faithful colleagues.

Since about the time I turned 65, which was last April, I've been thinking a lot about being older. 65, I mean, that's old, right? 65 is old so I pray every single morning now that from Psalm 92, that I'll remain green and full of sap. That's a poetic way of saying what the next line says which is that I'll bear fruit in old age, that I'll have a sound mind, good health, from Psalm 71, that I'll be able to declare God's strength to the next generation. So, you know, I don't want to waste any time. I want to make the most of the time that's left because 65, comparatively speaking, is a full life for which one should be grateful, and that's my outlook, gratitude for having lived this long. Let me remind you of the age at which our heroes, our Ron and my heroes died. Luther was 63. Calvin, 54. Knox, 58. John Owen, 67. Stephen Charnock, 52. John Bunyan, 59. Matthew Henry, 51. Jonathan Edwards, 54. George Whitefield, 55. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 57. J. Gresham Machen, 55. Our heroes, they died long before we did. Ron lived to be 69, that's a long time. Speaking in terms of, you know, the whole scope of human history, we should be grateful. I know it's a shock as it came about but we should be grateful that we had him as we did, as long as we did. Psalm 90:10 reinforces what I'm saying, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty." In other words, 80 is the exception. The norm is 70. Ron was just a few months away from 70. Psalm 139:16, God numbered our days before there was one. This is not an accident in that respect. It's not like, "Too bad or bad luck, he contracted the disease. The corona virus got him. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time." Well, yeah but God numbered his days so, you know, we find solace in that, we take refuge in that, we're comforted by that. This is part of the plan and purpose of God and it's part of his plan and purpose for you, and for me, and for the family, and for Donna, and for everybody, we're going to be alright. So he numbered, God numbered our days and Psalm 90:12 then goes back and says that we should number our days. Time is the most valuable thing that we have. Life is the most important gift that we have. Make the most of it. Do that which is of eternal significance and eternal consequence. Take care of your soul.

One of the great ironies of the moment, this is also a multi-part illustration, this little book here is called "The Great Concern: Preparation for Death," by Edward Pierce, a 17th century Puritan. Ron just published this book, so what he liked to do is transcribe great old books and then he'd send the electronic version of it off to the publisher and the publisher would then just put it together. It doesn't mention Ron anywhere in here. He did the work, nothing noted. He didn't care about that. He didn't want any attention. He was a humble man, a godly humble man. He didn't care about getting credit for it. But isn't it ironic that the book that he just handed out to the members of the staff of the church, "The Great Concern: Preparation for Death," the first paragraph, "To walk with God here on earth while we live and to be ready to live with God forever in heaven when we come to die is the great work we have to do, the great concern we have to mind in our present pilgrimage." I mean, that sums it all up. Okay, that not only sums up what Ron's outlook on life was, that sums up what the Bible says that our outlook on life ought to be, and it sums up the outlook that every one of us ought to have, that this life, this entire life is just merely a preparation for the next life. As we never tire of saying around here, life is short and eternity is long. You'd better get it right here because right now counts forever.

So be mindful of the brevity and uncertainty of life. What the Bible says about life is, it's fleeting. We are like the grass that withers and the flower that fades. We are as a mist, James 4:14. We appear for a little time and then we vanish. Life is short and it's uncertain. We don't know how many days we have. Okay, the timing on this was shocking. Well, we don't know that we have another hour, or day, or week, or month, or year, or decade. We don't have any idea. Life is short. Life is uncertain. We'd better be living for those things that are worthy of living for and pursuing the things that ought to be pursued, and we'd better be preparing our souls for that day when we will stand before God and give an account of ourselves because that day will come. And because Ron was a man of God to whom God will say, "Good and faithful servant," he would want us to know that and to ponder that and to consider that when we gather for his memorial service.

So be mindful of the brevity and uncertainty of life and fix your eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Yes, life is uncertain and brief but eternity is certain and forever. How do we know it's certain? Well, it's certain in Christ. How do we know it's certain in Christ? Because Jesus says it is. Jesus is trustworthy. Jesus is reliable. We can stake our eternity on what he promises and Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." And he promises that whoever believes in him will live even if he dies. "And the one who lives and believes in me," Jesus says, "will never die." Because through the cross this utter transformation of death has taken place so that he can speak to his people about death as though it does not even occur because all you're doing in dying is leaving this world and going into the presence of God.

How do we know that eternity is certain? Because Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one who comes to the Father comes to the Father but by me." How do I know he's the way to heaven? Because he says he is. He's the way. He's the truth. He's ultimate reality. He's life. He's the source of life. Jesus is the good shepherd

who laid down his life for the sheep. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

So be mindful of the brevity and uncertainty of life and fix your eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and be, finally, consoled. Be consoled. As the Apostle Paul says, "To live is Christ but to die is," what? "Gain." He says to depart and be with him is far better than staying behind here. So, of course, we weep. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Of course, we shed tears, we cry, we grieve, we mourn, but not hopelessly, not like those who have no hope, as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4. Why is it not hopeless grief? Because to die is gain. Because to depart and be with Christ is better than whatever this world offers. And so that has an impact upon our grief. It soothes us and comforts us to know that when we say goodbye to our loved ones when they pass from this world into the next world, that those who die in Christ are better off than they were. That has to add a sweetness to our sorrow. It must. This is where we're really testing our faith, do we really believe these things? If we do, then knowing that is going to have a moderating effect on our sadness. I mean, Ron's suffering was considerable for weeks and weeks and weeks. He's relieved of all that now.

And then there's the promise of reunion. So again speaking the language of the Bible, thus we will always be together with the Lord. Together. There's a reunion ahead. There's a separation but it's not a final separation. It's not an eternal separation. It's a temporal separation. It means there's reunion. It means that we will see once again our loved ones who die in Christ. So they are united to Christ and they have been taken into his presence, and we are united to Christ and we are united to each other, and so we will always be together in the Lord. And I have had the sad experience of conducting funerals where there was no hope, and believe me, it is a dark dark experience. The cries of anguish are pitiful. That's not our view. That's not our experience.

So we weep even as Jesus wept but not hopeless tears because to live is Christ and to die is gain, and thus we shall ever be together with the Lord, or as at the end of the 23rd Psalm that was just read, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," to which we can add a footnote, "I and my believing loved ones."

Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we are exceedingly grateful for gospel promises, those that we've just reviewed and so many others. We pray, our Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring to mind those wonderful promises, and that your Holy Spirit would comfort those who mourn, and that the promises of your gospel would provide deep consolation. And we thank you, O Lord, of the promise of that last great chapter of the Bible that in your presence there is no more suffering and no more pain or tears, that in your presence is the fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. And our Father, we pray that we would remember the virtues that Ron displayed, we pray that we would seek to follow him in his godliness, and in his pastoral compassion, follow him in his careful obedience and zeal to serve. And O Lord, we pray for everyone who is attending here, that you would impress upon our souls the reality of the brevity and uncertainty of life

and, oh, that there would not be anyone within the sound of this voice who would fail to make peace with you, O God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that in the weeks and months ahead that you would meet every need of the family in this time of loss. We pray together, O Lord, that prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, saying together: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom.



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And He who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son."

Revelation 21:1-7 (ESV)

**The Independent Presbyterian Church
Savannah, Georgia
January 29, 2021**

Memorial Service
The Rev. Ronald Harold Parrish
June 13, 1951 – Jan. 26, 2021
The Sanctuary
11:30 AM

The Silent Prayer

O Lord of life, who dwells in eternity, and who has planted in our hearts the faith and hope which look beyond our mortal life to another, even a heavenly country: We give thanks to You this day for the bright shining light of immortality in Jesus Christ. As He has shown us the blessedness of heaven on earth, and has called us into a kingdom not of this world, so may our life be made ever richer in the things that do not pass away. Raise us up, we pray, in the power of His Spirit, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Prepare us to follow Him, in hope and trust, through the darkness of the grave into the world of light where He has led the way, in the sure and certain hope of eternal life; through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Prelude “O Rest in the Lord” Mendelssohn

The Call to Worship Psalm 121

The Hymnal – #2 “O Worship the King” Lyons

The Invocation

The Scripture Reading – Psalm 23; Romans 8:28-39
1 Corinthians 15:50-58; John 14:1-11

The Psalm – #184 “The King of Love My Shepherd Is” (Ps 23)
St. Columba

The Message

The Prayer of Intercession & Lord’s Prayer

The Hymn – #81 “O Love of God, How Strong and True” Jerusalem

The Benediction

The Postlude – Enigma Variations #10, “Nimrod” Elgar

Officiating

Rev. Terry L. Johnson
Rev. Timothy P. Foster

Soloist

Rev. Timothy P. Foster

Cellist

Mrs. John Garnett

Organist

Dr. Jacob H. Fuhrman

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that remembrances be made to
Independent Presbyterian Church.

2

O Worship the King

All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. Ps. 145:10

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The first system contains the first four lines of the hymn. The second system contains the next four lines. The third system contains the final four lines. The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines that support the vocal melody.

1. O wor - ship the King all - glo - rious a - bove, O grate - ful - ly
2. O tell of his might, O sing of his grace, whose robe is the
3. The earth with its store of won - ders un - told, Al - might - y, your
4. Your boun - ti - ful care what tongue can re - cite? It breathes in the

sing his pow'r and his love; our shield and De - fend - er, the
light, whose can - o - py space. His char - iots of wrath the deep
pow'r has found - ed of old; has 'stab - lished it fast by a
air; it shines in the light; it streams from the hills; it de -

An - cient of Days, pa - vil - ioned in splen - dor and gird - ed with praise.
thun - der - clouds form, and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.
change - less de - cree, and round it has cast, like a man - tle, the sea.
scends to the plain; and sweet - ly dis - tils in the dew and the rain.

5. Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail;
your mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!
6. O measureless Might! Ineffable Love!
While angels delight to hymn you above,
the humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
with true adoration shall lisp to your praise.

Psalm 23

1. ¹The King of love my Shep - herd is,
 2. ²Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow
 3. ³Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed,
 4. ⁴In death's dark vale I fear no ill
 5. ⁵Thou spread'st a ta - ble in my sight;
 6. ⁶And so through all the length of days

whose good - ness fail - eth nev - er;
 my ran - somed soul He lead - eth,
 — but yet in love He sought me,
 with Thee, dear Lord, be - side me;
 Thine unc - tion grace be - stow - eth;
 Thy good - ness fail - eth nev - er;

I noth - ing lack if I am His
 And where the ver - dant pas - tures grow,
 And on His shoul - der gent - ly laid,
 Thy rod and staff my com - fort still,
 And O what trans - port of de - light
 Good Shep - herd, may I sing Thy praise

and He is mine for - ev - er.
 with food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 — and home, re - joic - ing, brought me.
 Thy cross be - fore to guide me.
 from Thy pure cha - lice flow - eth.
 with - in Thy house for - ev - er.

O Love of God, How Strong and True

I pray that you ... may have power ... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Eph. 3:17-19

Introduction Am⁷ A⁷ D Bm Am⁹ F⁹

Unison C F C F

1. O love of God, how strong and true, e - ter - nal
 2. O heav'n-ly love, how pre - cious still, in days of
 3. We read you best in him who came to bear for
 4. O love of God, our shield and stay through all the

C Am⁷ F C Am⁷

and yet ev - er new, un - com - pre - hend - ed and un -
 wea - ri - ness and ill, in nights of pain and help - less -
 us the cross of shame; sent by the Fa - ther from on
 per - ils of our way! E - ter - nal love, in you we

F#dim Em Am⁷ Em D C Dm A

bought, be - yond all knowl - edge and all thought! O love of
 ness, to heal, to com - fort, and to bless! O wide - em -
 high, our life to live, our death to die. We read your
 rest, for - ev - er safe, for - ev - er blest. We will ex -

Dm⁷ *Gm* *Dm* *G* *F* *C*

God, how deep and great, far deep - er than man's deep - est
 brac - ing, won - drous love! We read you in the sky a -
 pow'r to bless and save, e'en in the dark - ness of the
 alt you, God and King, and we will ev - er praise your

F *C* *Dm⁷* *G⁷* *C* *F*

hate; self - fed, self - kin - dled like the light, change-less, e -
 bove, we read you in the earth be - low, in seas that
 grave; still more in res - ur - rec - tion light we read the
 name; we will ex - tol you ev - 'ry day, and ev - er -

Interlude

C *F* *G* *C* *Am⁷* *A⁷* *D* *Bm* *Am⁹* *F⁹*

ter - nal, in - fi - nite.
 swell, and streams that flow.
 ful - ness of your might.
 more your praise pro - claim.

Final ending

C *C⁷* *Am* *F* *C*

Horatius Bonar, 1858
 Mod.

JERUSALEM (PARRY) L.M.D.
 C. Hubert H. Parry, 1916
 Arr. by Janet Wyatt, 1977

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The Reverend Ronald Harold Parrish June 13, 1951 - January 26, 2021

The Reverend Ronald Harold Parrish, Associate Minister of the Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) of Savannah, was called into the Lord's arms in the early hours of Tuesday morning. He was 69 years old. Ron had been recuperating from a nearly 3-month long health battle that began with Covid-19 in October. He died of cardiac arrest.

Ron was serving in his 26th year at IPC, a calling he truly loved and for which he labored diligently. Affectionately referred to as a "people's" pastor, Ron cherished the work of ministering to God's *people* and was certainly known for his warm, engaging personality and affection for others. Housecalls, hospital visitations and praying with those in need were particular gifts and duties he enjoyed. He made many lasting friendships with out-of-town visitors from around the world as he walked the Sunday morning aisles of IPC greeting new faces, not to mention being one of the first people to befriend newcomers. Particular among his favorite parishioners were the children of IPC families.

Ron was born June 13, 1951 in Montezuma, GA, the eldest of Prince and Ann Parrish's three children. Soon after his birth, Ron's family relocated to his dad's hometown of Greensboro, GA, where he was reared. Young Ron found an outlet in high school athletics through which he formed friendships that were formative in his early Christian life. These years also earned him the moniker of "Doc," a nickname he carried throughout high school, college and seminary. Ron was led to pursue his faith as a vocation and fulfilled a dream to attend Belhaven College (now University) in Jackson, MS (class of '73) with several other high school classmates from Greensboro, later earning a Masters of Divinity from Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson (class of '77).

It was during his time serving as a young assistant pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Montgomery, AL, that he met and fell in love with a newly credentialed Canadian nurse who had recently moved to the United States for a short nursing assignment. Ron received a "tip" from an elder in his congregation that a team of Canadian nurses recently arrived in town and Ron gladly volunteered himself to help the cohort find a church home! Ron and Donna were married in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada less than a year later and celebrated 41 years of marriage in October.

Ron was a devoted husband and father. He frequently showed great enthusiasm in his children's avocations and professions, often engaging himself in their respective interests. Ron and Donna were overjoyed at their new role as grandparents for the last 2 years, Ron particularly embracing his position as "Papa."

Ron was proud of Donna's Canadian heritage and faithfully returned her and their children to Ontario annually for summer holiday with Donna's parents and family. He spent many years camping with Donna's family across Ontario's provincial parks and introducing each of his children to fishing in Ontario's Grand River.

An avid reader and lover of books, he amassed a collection of historic and theological works that most ministers or academics would envy — save when such a collection must be moved, as was the case several times in Ron’s life.

Ron was a lover of music — particularly classical and jazz, and of course, of sacred choral music and hymns. He was always ready with a “new find” to share with his children. With his knack for impersonation, voices and an on-demand recall for song lyrics to fit a situation, he lovingly brought joy to his family and friends.

Ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church in America in 1977, Ron celebrated his 44th year of public ministry in 2020. During those years, Ron served congregations in Montgomery, AL; Roanoke and Martinsville, VA; Chestnut Mountain, GA; Pensacola, FL; and two separate congregations in Savannah, GA.

Accolades and praise were never sought by Ron, nor did he enjoy them. He would have grimaced at the reading of this tribute. He carried out his work and life with a profound sense of duty and gratitude that the Lord had provided him far more than he had ever imagined or deserved. As he wrote in a public note of thanks to the congregation of IPC on the celebration of his 20th year serving the church, “To quote my favorite homespun philosopher, Bernard P. Fife, ‘You know how I hate all this fuss and falderal. Lord knows job itself’s reward enough.’”

A blessing at his age, Ron was predeceased by no immediate family. He is survived by his wife Donna, son Matthew (Ann Douglas) of Richmond, VA, daughter Leighann Rosenfeld (Victor), son Andrew (Claire), and son David of Savannah; grandsons Max Rosenfeld and Joel Parrish; his parents, M. H. “Prince” Parrish (age 95) and Ann Carr Parrish (age 91) of Greensboro, GA; his brother Scott of Greensboro, GA and his sister Patti Parrish Stansell (Calvin) of Watkinsville, GA; sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law and nieces and nephews across Georgia and Ontario, Canada.

The Parrish and Rosenfeld family sincerely thanks the nurses, doctors and administrators of the St. Joseph’s/Candler Hospital system for their attentive care for Ron over the last 3 months.

Remembrances can be made to the Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah, P.O. Box 9266, Savannah, GA, 31412.