

Funeral: Herb Hendrix

Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33

Psalm 27

1 John 3:1-2

John 6:37-40

We have come together
on this rainy February day
to bid farewell to
a coach,
a mentor,
a husband,
a father,
a grandfather,
a counselor,
a curly haired jokester,
and a friend.

As sad as we are to see this day come,
I don't know about you,
but I can't help but laugh
every time I think about Herb Hendrix.
I don't think he'd have it any other way.

Of all the scripture readings we've just heard,
there's one line that just keeps sticking
in my head and in my heart:

See what love the Father has given us. (*1 John 3:1*)

These past few days in Herb's life
have been downright saturated with love,
which isn't a surprise
given all the love Herb cultivated and shared
over a long and generous lifetime.

As we've shared stories
over the past week—
often at his bedside,
some at his kitchen table—
we've laughed and we've cried
at all the love the Father has given us
through the life and love of Herb Hendrix.

* * *

Some of us have known the love of the Father
through Herb's twinkly-eyed smile . . .
always there and
always ready
to make you laugh.

Like the time he found out
that Cheetos attract fish
when you snorkel.
(Yes, this is a true story.)
Once, on a family vacation,
while Herb's son Josh was
swimming, snorkeling, and taking it all in,
there came a moment
when Josh found himself surrounded
by dozens—or as he tells it—
hundreds, maybe thousands of fish.

Barracudas!
Sharks!
Creatures of the deep!

Josh hightailed it out of the water,
got back up on the boat,
and what did he find?

Herb Hendrix
shaking a gigantic bag of Cheetos into the water
and laughing his head off.

* * *

Others of us have known the love of the Father
through Herb's own life as a father figure . . .
a guy who would take people in,
make room for others,
give kids a chance,
and always root for the underdog.

Herb's family is big—
children,
stepchildren,
adopted children,
honorary children,
grandchildren—
but in his mind,

there were to be no distinctions
like steps or halves . . .
you were just part of the family.

Sometimes with tenderness,
sometimes with tough love,
Herb tried his best
to help the people around him
become the best
they could possibly be.

The other day the family sent me a video
of a professional golfer
whom Herb recruited years ago from Spain.
Back then, that kid didn't speak a lick of English,
and no one wanted to give him a chance.
But Herb did.
Herb brought him over,
right here to Tifton and to ABAC,
coached him,
mentored him,
gave him a place to stay . . .
and changed his life forever.
In perfect English,
that young man said in that video,
"I wouldn't be where I am today
if it hadn't been for you, Herb."

There are a lot of us in this room
who could say the same thing.

* * *

Finally, others of us have known the love of the Father
through Herb's deep, deep well of compassion . . .
someone who cared enough to listen
no matter what you had to say.

Here at St. Anne's,
we have a little known
but very important ministry
called Stephen Ministry.
When you experience a major life transition—
loss of a loved one,
loss of a marriage,
loss of a job—

you can get a Stephen Minister:
a specially trained church member
who commits to be your spiritual companion,
to sit, and listen, and love you without judgment
as you go through your time of trial.

Herb Hendrix brought that ministry here.

He flew to California;
he got trained;
he became a trainer;
and he brought Stephen Ministry to St. Anne's
where it still goes on today.

In fact, the irony is that
we were going to have a Stephen Ministry meeting today
to discuss how to broaden the love of our church
through shared pastoral care at St. Anne's.
Instead—and rightly so—we've come to lay to rest
the man who brought it to us in the first place.

* * *

There were some funny moments over the past week
as I went to visit Herb in the hospital.

Every time I showed up,
I brought Communion.
That's just something we Episcopalians do.

But every time I offered it to him,
he'd go like this. (Crossing his arms quickly over his chest.)

Finally, on the third or fourth visit,
the truth came out.
One of the kids told me,
"Fr. Lonnie, every time you come in here
Dad thinks you're trying to give him Last Rites."

I laughed. "HERB! It's just Communion!
Shut up and take it!" I said.
He grinned a big ol' grin
and stretched out his hand.
There in that little hospital room,
we all held church together.
It was the holiest place on earth.

* * *

The very last time Herb and I spoke—
the night before the morning
when I finally did give him Last Rites—
he had been moved home,
and I walked through the crowded house
filled with grandchildren running everywhere,
past the conversations at the kitchen table,
back to his little room in the rear of the house.

When I roused him,
he opened his eyes, and I whispered,
“Herb. Man, you’ve got a *whole house*
full of people who *love* you.”

And he smiled that
twinkly-eyed,
curly haired,
Herb Hendrix smile,
and simply said,
“Sweet people.”

See what love the Father has given us.

* * *

We are so lucky to have been loved by Herb Hendrix.
He is so lucky to have been loved by us.

But more than that,
oh how blessed we all have been
to be loved by the living God
and by his son Jesus Christ,
the source of all the love
that Herb ever knew.

Today, Herb has run with patience the race.
Today, Herb has done all he needed to do.
Today, Herb sits at the Communion table,
not like *this* (arms crossed)
but like *this* (arms outstretched),
having a grand old time
catching up with old friends,
worshipping the Lamb on the Throne,

and—knowing him—probably wishing
he could sprinkle a big ol’ bag of Cheetos
over all our heads even now.

See what love the Father has given us.
And aren’t we glad.

Amen.