

November 14, 2019  
1 Timothy 1:15

Funeral Service for Bryan Koepp  
Rev. Matthew C. Rauh

### **Jesus Came to Save Me, a Sinner!**

***Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.***

Sometimes it is not so much what is said, but who said it. I can talk to you about the days I played basketball. Maybe you would be interested in hearing that. You ask if I played in college. No, I didn't. How about high school? Was I a star on the high school team? No. In fact, I was cut from the JV team my freshman year. But I can tell you how I was a bench player in grade school and averaged two points a game. Maybe you wouldn't want to hear about that. Now if Kawhi Leonard or Karl-Anthony Towns offered to talk about basketball, you probably would be interested. They know what they are talking about.

Our passage from God's Word today is a wonderful passage. ***"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."*** They tell us that Jesus came. Of course he came. We are about to celebrate this fact in a month and a half at Christmas. We know who came. He is Jesus the Christ, God himself, the very Son of God as Gabriel told Mary. His name is Immanuel which means God with us. He came as a baby and grew up as a true man.

But why? Well, if you listen to Amazon and all the stores, he came to boost sales at Christmas time. But that is not why he came. He came to save sinners. This means the world is full of sinners. If there were no sinners, then Jesus did not have to come. But he came because the world is full of sinners, and he came to save them. We know how he does that. He traded places with sinners. We heard about that earlier. God gave him up, that is, he let him go to and die on the cross to pay the hell and punishment sin demands. Because he did, we are saved for whoever believes in him will not perish but have what? Eternal life. Yes, sadly many don't want that for whoever does not believe stands condemned of course. But Jesus came to save sinners by taking our place and dying for our sins.

This is all true. And this alone gives us hope. Even if we didn't know much or anything about Paul, these words alone can and will change your life forever.

But it is interesting when we consider the man God used to give us these words. His name is Paul. When he said that Jesus came to save sinners, Paul wasn't merely repeating what God said. He understood firsthand what these words mean. They were meant for him, too. Right before our text he tells us how he sinned. ***"Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."***

There was a time when he hated God. Sure, he went to church and sang psalms to God in heaven, but he hated Jesus. He hated him so much he persecuted anyone who believed in Jesus, and he was violent about it. He gladly held the coats of all those who stoned Stephen to death. He then was hired by the church to find and arrest Christians so they could be executed. He was obsessed. If Christians fled Jerusalem, he formed a posse and hunted them down. To top it off, he was arrogant, thinking that he was so good and pious that God would beg him to come into heaven. That, of course, changed when he was on the road to Damascus with warrants to arrest Christians there. Jesus knocked him off his horse literally and blinded him and asked, "Why do you persecute me?" Saul was converted that day. He was baptized in Damascus by a pastor who knew his reputation and at first was afraid to, and eventually became one of God's top missionaries.

It took some time for others to believe he was now a fellow Christian. Many of the Apostles and believers in Jerusalem didn't want to accept him because of his violent past. They remembered what he had done, and so did Paul. I wonder if he would wake up in the middle of the night and see the faces of Christians he had murdered? Can you imagine if he came to preach in a church and there was a woman in the pew whose sister or cousin disappeared in one of Paul's purges. A day did not go by when he could be guilt free. "The good I want to do, I am not doing, and the evil I hate, I keep on doing. Who will save me from this body of death?" he confessed.

Sure, Paul had awesome credentials: he helped establish dozens of churches; he endured whipping and jail time for Christ; he sacrificed all for Christ including his life. But when he was in a room full of people, he always considered himself the worse sinner in that room.

That is how Paul approached God, too. He never approached God with a handful of good works. He instead approached God as he was, a sinner, a chief sinner, a blasphemer, persecutor and violent man. And when he approached God like that, what did he find? That Jesus came to save sinners of whom he was the worse. He received God's grace and mercy that led to Christ and forgiveness where God remembers our sins no more. That is why in his last letter to Timothy, Paul faced death but he was confident because he will wear a crown of righteousness. And what gave Paul such confidence? That Jesus came to save sinners just himself.

I hope and pray that if Christ does not return in my lifetime, that some pastor would stand before my family and friends and tell them this very same thing. Pastors are expected to live exemplary lives, but my family knows that I am far from exemplary. They saw it when I was selfish and did not submit to them. My friends may remember when my words or actions were not God pleasing. Members of my church may remember when I let them down or failed to be there for them or said the wrong thing.

They know that. And I know it. That is why they need to hear that Jesus came to save sinners like me, like Paul, like you. We can't come to God with a list of our good deeds. If we tried we would be cut faster than I was cut from JV basketball for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But when we come to God as we are, with nothing in our hand, as sinners, we find his mercy and grace.

What a treasure God has given us in Christ. This means Paul, a blasphemer and violent murderer is in heaven. Think of David, arrogant, a murderer, adulterer, a polygamist, is in heaven. So is Rahab the prostitute, Thomas the doubter, a thief dying on the cross next to Jesus, you, me, Bryan Koeppe. In fact, heaven is full of only sinners.

So, family, let these words serve you well now and for the years and eternity to come. Your husband, father, friend is saved. You can be confident of this. Bryan didn't do anything to force God to take him to heaven. None of us. But there is nothing he did that keeps him out of heaven. Jesus made sure of that. So Jesus came and saved Bryan Koeppe. And not just him. This means you and me and all of us. This is a trustworthy saying. You can trust it completely and blindly. Amen.

### **The Funeral Service for Bryan Koeppe**

Service: Page 144 of *Christian Worship*

Hymns: *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*, CW 411  
*In Christ Alone*, CWS 752

Readings:

**Psalm 34:15-19** *We are here today because God has answered our prayers for deliverance. He has delivered Bryan from his troubles and brought him home to heaven.*

***The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous  
and his ears are attentive to their cry;  
the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,  
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.***

***The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles.  
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.***

**John 3:14-21** *We know John 3:16, the gospel in a nutshell, by heart. Let me read for you the context before and after. The only way we mortals can be saved is because of Christ who was given up as a sacrifice for our sins. And this is ours simply through faith. Just believe for it is sad that many do not.*

***Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.***

***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.***

## **The Obituary for Bryan Koepp**

Bryan Koepp, age 55 of Arlington passed away on Sunday, November 10, 2019 at the Lutheran Home in Belle Plaine. Funeral service will be at 11 a.m. on Thursday, November 14, 2019 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Arlington. Rev. Matthew Rauh will officiate. Visitation will be from 4-8p.m. on Wednesday at the church and continue one hour prior to the service at the church on Thursday morning. Interment will be in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery in Arlington.

Bryan was born in New Prague on June 24, 1964 to Henry and Patricia (Behnke) Koepp. He was baptized into the Kingdom of God on July 12, 1964 and confirmed in the Christian faith on April 8, 1979. He grew up near Carver and attended Trinity Lutheran School in Belle Plaine through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He graduated from Belle Plaine High School in 1983. On April 13, 1985 he married Joyce Dose at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Arlington. Bryan worked as a superintendent of multiple golf courses and as a maintenance mechanic. He loved hunting, fishing, working in his garage, cooking & entertaining family and friends. He is preceded in death by his father-in-law, Melvin Dose and Grandparents, Walter & Helen Koepp and Fred & Erna Behnke

Bryan is survived by his wife, Joyce; Children, Justin (Kelsey) Koepp of Arlington, Tyler Koepp of Mankato, Stephanie (Bryan) Lamont of Owatonna; Grandchildren, Wyatt & Dawson Koepp and Cade Lamont; Parents, Hank and Pat Koepp of Carver; Siblings, Randy (Kathy) Koepp of Belle Plaine, Rick (Sharon) Koepp of Arlington, Judy Jacques of Chanhassen; Mother-in-law, Marcella Dose of Arlington; Brothers and Sisters in law, Jeanne & Galen Ribar of Arlington, Leon & Renae Dose of Arlington, Harris & Linda Dose of Arlington, Sharon & Rick Koepp of Arlington; and many nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and cousins.

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the Lord called out of this veil of tears the soul of Bryan Koepp at the age of 55 years, four months and seventeen days. His mortal remains will be committed to their resting place at St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery in Arlington, Minnesota, to await the resurrection of the dead.

**"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised," Job 1:21.**