

“Do you remember the trips to Tawas? Do you remember the Singing Bridge? Do you remember the movie *Gone with the Wind*? How about the 10 commandments? Didn't Charlton Heston do a good job as Moses? Do you remember how when I was caretaker at Trinity Lutheran Church, how I was always punctual for work, and did a perfectionist job scrubbing and sweeping the floors? Do you remember how I was always anxious to go to church and loved to help out with whatever task was asked for to do? How about those beautiful hymns? Do you remember *What a Friend we have in Jesus*, I'm but a stranger here, *The Lord's my Shepherd*, or *Abide with me*? Those are hymns I want at my funeral one day. And don't forget to include Psalm 23 in the funeral service”.

Gerald K loved to recall stuff that had happened from his life in the past. He had an unbelievable memory. He could remember things that you and I would have easily forgotten. For example when Lou forgot to ask his brother one year about putting a grave blanket on their parents grave, Gerald contacted his brother by phone in the fall and asked, “What about flowers for mom and dad's grave?” Society would say that Gerald K was slow, since he wasn't academically sharp like most of you here tonight. That may be true. But Gerald is someone who remembered the most important truths in this life, particularly in regards to Jesus Christ. In that sense he is more intelligent than billions of people in this world. Gerald knew that he was a sinner. He needed a Savior. And that Savior was Jesus. And I am sure that Gerald would like all of you to join his mom, dad, and himself in the better place of heaven oneday too. The question that Gerald and I pose to you this night is, “Do You Remember how to Arrive at a Better Place?”

As we go through this life, there are different things that trouble us? Upset us. One thing that troubled Gerald at times was loneliness. He really liked to have people around on a regular basis, to talk to, to do things with. When Gerald lived in Bay City, and his mother was at a nursing home, he walked 3 miles a day to the nursing home and back to spend time with his mom. He missed his mom being around, since he had spent so many years with her, here in Bay City, and also in California. Loneliness troubled Gerald. However, that is where someone named Jesus came to the aid of Gerald and dealt with the root cause of loneliness. You see, the root cause of loneliness deals with our relationship with God. We have all broken our God's commandments and created a large wall, separating us from our God. We are in a sense alone, isolated from God. But at the cross of Calvary, Jesus experienced the ultimate of loneliness, so that might never be truly alone again. At Calvary, Jesus knocked down that wall of isolation, and brought us back into a close relationship with God. Truly, “Jesus is with us always, even unto the end of the world.”

In fact Jesus says to us today, “Let not your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me.” When you trust in someone, you believe they can do what they say they can do. You have confidence in them. They will not hurt you, but have your best interests in mind. Lou always tried to have the best interests of Gerald in mind. He tried to protect him so others would not take advantage of him. Lou tried to always allow his brother to make decisions so he would feel important. Gerald trusted his brother Lou. So also Gerald trusted Jesus to help him with his sins that troubled him. Colossians 3:14. *“He has forgiven all our sins and canceled every record of the debt we owed. Christ has done away with it by nailing it to the cross.”* This is God's pardon program. He says He nailed it all to the cross. Jesus paid for my guilt. That means I don't have to pay for it. He was hung for my hang ups. Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross so I can quit nailing myself to the cross. He wants to forgive your past. He says He wants to cancel every record of all debts you owe -- emotional debts, relational debts, sins. Canceled. How long do you remember a bill that's been paid? I don't remember it at all. Once it's paid, I forget it. I think the point He's saying is this: Once God's forgiven it, I can forget it. Because Jesus is who He said it was, my past can be forgiven. I don't have to go carrying a load of guilt around. It's unnecessary. *“There is no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ.”* Those of you who are Baby Boomers, remember when you were growing up you had a Etch-A-Sketch? If you messed up the picture you just flip it, shake it, turn it over. There would be a clean slate. This is God's etch-a-sketch verse in the bible. He says, I want to wipe it clean. You can walk out of here tonight, knowing that every single thing you've ever done wrong up until this point is completely forgiven. That's good news. That's news I can use. No condemnation! Jesus Christ did not come to rub it in, He came to rub it out. He said, *“I didn't*

*come to condemn the world, I came to save it.*" He wants to change you, to help you, give you a new beginning, a clear conscience. That's good news for Gerald. All his troubling sins have been forgiven. He has a clean slate before God.

Another thing that may trouble us is that Gerald was given too little in this life. He did not have a sharp mind like most of us here today. Thus, he could not go on to college, get a degree and a high paying job. He was slow or in today's world, a Special need person. In addition, he had problems with his heart, and had to be on blood thinners around the clock. He did not have a body that was built to really endure the test of time. And yet Gerald knew that Jesus was going to do an extreme makeover of his body soon. The Bible says, "He, Jesus will change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like his glorious body. The body Jesus had after he rose from the dead, was one that could go through walls, but also one that could eat food. It was a perfect body, free of defect. Oneday soon when Jesus returns for Judgment day, He is going to restore Gerald's body, glorify it, and reunite it with his soul in heaven. No valve surgery ever needed again, no strokes, no more mental slowness. Gerald will have a 4.0 mind, and be in top physical condition. You see, heaven has no handicap parking places. There are no pharmacies and prescriptions to fill. Heaven doesn't have hospitals, nursing homes, or rehabilitation centers. The days of aches and pains for Gerald are over, the trips to the doctors have ceased, and the all his pain has ended.

So what now has become of Gerald? Does he have to wait until Judgment Day to enjoy heaven? If you take a look at the story of the thief on the cross. Jesus told him that today, he would be with him in Paradise. That means right away. Therefore when Gerald K. squeezed his brother's hand for the last time, and breathed his last, his soul went immediately to heaven. He began a whole new life in the House that Jesus has built for Him. Yes, Gerald is now with Emil and Gladys. He is in a better place. And eternity is a long time. We will spend more time on that side of eternity than on this side. Here we only spend 60, 70, maybe 80 years. This is just the first inch of the yardstick. This is preschool for what's going to happen in eternity.

So how did Gerald get to heaven? There are two ways potential ways. Plan A is to earn it. That's the performance plan. To earn it you only have to never sin and always do what's right for your entire lifetime. Always make the right decision, always say the right thing, never the wrong thing, be perfect. It would be as if they changed the rules of the Baseball Hall of Fame and said in order to get in you had to bat 1000 and play error free ball your entire career. Sorry 300 hitters won't make it. Since none of us qualify for Plan A, God came up with Plan B. Plan B is Christ lives a perfect life for you, dies on a cross to pay for your sins, and then rises again to assure you the price has been paid. God the Holy Spirit leads you to believe that this is true and the only way back into God's family. As Jesus himself said, *"I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me."* Sounds simple, Simply believe in Jesus as your Savior and Resurrected Lord, and you will be saved. Gerald believed in Plan B, the Jesus plan. The result, Gerald is in heaven now.

Gerald didn't have to wait in line for the apostle Paul to open the gate to let him in. There was no lack of fruit on the tree of life. There was no lack of water cascading through the city. Heaven was prepared for Gerald from the foundations of the world ... it was ready for him on his arrival. There are no "under construction" signs when he arrived! Jesus went ahead of Gerald to make sure all things were ready. All things were prepared for his arrival.

So what is this place called heaven like? I have always told people. Think of joys you have on this earth, and multiply them by the 100's of trillions. Gerald loved movies. Old Westerns. He loved sporting teams like the Tigers, The Red Wings, Lions, and college ball at Michigan or Michigan State. Wearing Sports Memorabilia, like a Red Wings shirt or Tiger cap. These movies and sporting events brought him great joy. So did the joy of giving a gift of windows to Trinity Lutheran School, and seeing a picture of those kids before those windows, with a sign, "Thank you Kasischke boys!" Well the joy, that these things brought him needs to be multiplied over and over again.

Remember too heaven is place of countless blessings. It is such a place because of the things that will not be there. There is much of it here. Pious job once said, A man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Even Jesus was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But there will be no sorrow

or sadness in heaven. There will be no pain in heaven, no long nights of suffering. A passage written in Revelation says, "For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes." Gerald doesn't have to cry anymore or miss anymore his mom and dad. No more need for handkerchiefs, or kleenex boxes. No more tears spilling from our eyes.

Furthermore, "We shall see his face! That is our Savior's face. There are some people in the world we aren't allowed to see when we want to. If you'd stroll up to the white house in Washington today and demand to see the President, you're probably get the shuffle treatment. You'd end of talking to one of his advisors or else it would take you days for an opportunity to meet him. Our president is an important man. But think how much more important Jesus is. There is no red tape when you want to see him in heaven. Jesus throws the doors of heaven wide open and says, "Come on in, see me face to face." Bring your prayers to me. Hear my words firsthand. Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Heaven will then be a place of happy reunions. It won't be like a mere earthly reunion. Oftentimes at family reunions, we miss someone who can't make it for one reason or another. However, in heaven we will see our loved ones. Gerald gets to see his mom and dad again. His parents loved and believed in the same Jesus that he believed in. What a family reunion is taking place.

A lot of people sometimes question what their purpose for living on this earth is. I always like to say to that question, "To go to heaven and to take as many with me as possible." Our purpose for living on this earth is to serve God by doing the best we can in whatever profession we find ourselves, to remember how we get to the better place of heaven by Jesus, and share with as many people the reason of the hope we have in Jesus.

Gerald fulfilled his purpose in life. He worked hard at his caretaker job, took care of his mom when she suffered from dementia, knew that Jesus was his Savior and the one who would get him to heaven, and financially supported young kids who were attending Trinity Lutheran School, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, wanting them and others to know their Savior, and to know him even better. On his credenza, was His hymnal, Bible, and Catechism. All very important to him. These books should be at the forefront of every person's library. So, do you remember how to arrive at the Father's House? Gerald remembered, and he wants you to remember too! Amen.