

## FUNERAL HOMILY FOR EDGAR LILLY January 20, 2017

at St. Mark's Church, Halifax, N.S. **Matthew 11:25-30**

I welcome you this morning to this funeral service where we will properly acknowledge the memory of EDGAR LILLY and give him the proper Christian burial rites by praying for his soul and consigning his remains to the earth, from which all life has sprung.

This funeral liturgy and burial office that we are attending today for EDGAR and his family has two major purposes. Firstly, since the dawn of time, men and women in every culture have developed rituals to honour those in their communities who have died. With the coming of the Christian era, and the belief that we confess in our Creeds about eternal life and resurrection, these rituals now belong in the circle of the family and friends of the person who died. When that circle is Christian, the funeral rites now take place in the setting of this larger Christian fellowship.

Our second purpose of our being together here this morning is to allow ourselves to come to terms with EDGAR'S bodily departure from us. Each of you has known EDGAR in different ways; together you can share memories of him that go far beyond the experiences of his immediate family.

Twelve days ago, on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> of January in a snowstorm we celebrated the Epiphany of Christ, the coming of the Magi with their gifts and expectations around this new king of the Jews. Last Sunday we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus by his cousin John, an event marked by the voice of God saying, Behold, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. These events took place so that the promise of the love and forgiveness of God could be made complete by God taking human form and living a short life here upon this earth. Our Gospel reading from Matthew echo's that promise.

*<sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'*

There is a wonderful legend concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to his visible ministry. The legend claims that Jesus the carpenter was one of the master yoke-makers in the Nazareth area. People came from miles around for a yoke, hand carved and crafted by Jesus son of Joseph.

When customers arrived with their team of oxen Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the team, their height, the width, the space between them, and the size of their shoulders. Within a week, the team would be brought back and he would carefully place the newly made yoke over the shoulders, watching for rough places, smoothing out the edges and fitting them perfectly to this team of oxen.

That's the yoke Jesus invites us to take. Do not be misled by the word "easy," for its root word in Greek speaks directly of the tailor-made yokes: they were "well-fitting." The yoke Jesus invites us to take, the yoke that brings rest to weary souls, is one that is made exactly to our lives and hearts. The yoke he invites us to wear fits us well, does not rub us nor cause us to develop sore spirits and is designed for two. His yokes were always designed for two. And our yoke-partner is none other than Christ himself.

Running throughout all scripture from the beginning to the end is the theme that ours is a burden bearing Christ. He is not just a Lord whom we burden, and we do, but a Lord who solicits our burdens.

Today, on this occasion, when our hearts are saddened because of the loss of a loved one, we hear some promises of the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ. These promises, if accepted and trusted, will bring us comfort and peace in our sadness.

The loss of a loved one, a husband of 69 years, a father, grandfather and great grandfather can seem to be a burden that is impossible to bear.

We have gathered together in a church building and within a congregation that has become a significant part of the life of the Lilly family. We come together today as a church community, family and friends, where we celebrate joy and happiness as well as pain and sorrow together.

One cannot serve in the Merchant Navy during war time – with the darkness, the sudden explosion of a torpedo, watching friends and comrades blown-up or drowned – without having some effect upon the person. In surviving this horror, as millions did, you could return home maimed physically, mentally or spiritually or any combination of the three.

However, God gives us the strength to carry on – and as the war ends, and the surviving men and women returned home, those survivors took up a trade, found a suitable partner, married, had kids and continued to contribute to the lives of their families and others.

With the war, experience and getting older, he joined the Merchant Navy and participated in several top-secret missions to lay undersea cable to connect allied forces. He stayed at sea with a career in National Sea Products and finally stayed on land with a career with CN Railways.

Today as we remember the life of EDGAR LILLY– we give thanks for the contribution he has made to his country, his family and his community for the past 96 years. As this is a service in a church, we give thanks for the promises of God made by the words and actions of his Son Jesus. We anticipate the fulfillment of those promises in the life of him whom we mourn and in our own lives as well.

God is steadfast, constant, and forever dependable. You can trust these promises of Christ. If you stand on these promises, you will have comfort and strength, not only now in this hour of bereavement, but in all the days ahead.  
AMEN.