

Welcome to this memorial service for Ed DeRegibus. Our Lord knows full well the sadness of death and separation, and so He is able to walk this difficult path with us.

There was never anyone quite like Ed. For starters, you may have found the processional a little unusual for a memorial service. But Jesus Is My Leader sums up his life, and that musical genre is Ed all over.

Ed had broad tastes in music, art, books, food, you name it. You see on the back of your program one of his favorite paintings and a quote from one of his favorite books. He loved beauty, loved museums, and loved creating art himself, including pottery at Mainly Clay.

More importantly, he loved the beauty of his Lord, the author of all beauty, and sharing the good news of Jesus with people far and wide.

So I hope in this service you will be inspired by Ed's amazing life and by the faith and hope and beauty that guided him.

Homily for Ed's memorial service by Jon Marken

When Sherri and I moved to Farmville in 1984, one of the first couples we met were Ed and Missy. They were so hospitable, not just to us but to everyone. Over the years we forged an ever-tighter friendship. Their kids were a bit older than ours so they were good for advice and encouragement.

But our friendship was more than a typical church friendship. We liked to talk books, arts, theology, you name it. We hiked together, and I recall a couple of great canoe trips, including one where the keys to their van, the van that was *supposed* to carry us back to our starting point, somehow ended up on the bottom of the river, never to be seen again. Perhaps the word is overused, but Sherri and I developed true koinonia with the DeRegibi, as we called them.

Ed was always hard to keep up with! I served with him on the board of our pregnancy center and also in leadership at our church, along with other avenues of ministry. When he set his mind to something—and he set his mind to many wonderful things—you had better move fast if you wanted to help with the effort! He was always a faith-in-action kind of guy, ready to jump in and get the job done.

We house sat for Ed and Missy for over a year when they went to Mexico and Guatemala with Youth with a Mission, and one day I stumbled on a list Ed had made for his spiritual development. Wish I could remember the details, but I was impressed, and humbled, that he was so systematic about trying to live out his faith and improve himself.

He was also transparent. He didn't try to hide his shortcomings but readily acknowledged them in his effort to overcome them. I must say he was a great inspiration to my own Christian walk.

He was also generous and would give away very valuable things, such as nice bicycles. But you had to grab them fast as he wasn't going to wait for you!

To me, Ed was very much like Peter in the scriptures, another faith-in-action kind of guy—impetuous, buoyant, a natural leader. I can picture Ed there on the mountain with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah saying, “hey, let's pitch some tents and stay here awhile.” I can also see him falling on his knees before Jesus after the great catch of fish and saying, “depart from me, I'm a sinful man.” To which Jesus said to Peter, and I'm sure in so many words to Ed long ago, “Don't be afraid. From now on you will fish for people.”

I sometimes pity the people in Scripture who did very wrong things and had to see those things recorded forever for everyone throughout the ages to know. Peter denied Christ right at the moment it counted the most, in the courtyard as Jesus was being sentenced to death. Yet there is no evidence, once Jesus restored him, that he worried about it ever again. He knew it was a testimony to God's great grace and went on with his ministry, a ministry central to the church throughout the ages.

Likewise, Ed would tell me about his delight in God's forgiveness as a spur for me to continue walking in grace. His struggles, past and present, never defined him. God's forgiveness and grace defined him. And he lived such a joyful life as a result. Like Peter, he would get up and carry on.

So just a few words from Peter's life and writings might help shed some light on who Ed was and who we *all* can be through the grace of God.

First, Peter went where there was need, to Samaria, Joppa, Caesarea, Antioch, Lydda (lee-da), and of course Jerusalem. That's what faith-in-action kinds of people do. Ed always had a heart for missions, whether nearby missions or those far away, and indeed remembered fondly his time in Central and South America.

Second, Peter learned to fully accept those outside the Jewish race, the Samaritans and Gentiles. Again, I never observed any reservations whatsoever on Ed's part to love and accept the people who crossed his path, whatever their race or station in life. We once had a woman with special needs in our church, Elois, and she would share all kinds of inappropriate things during our sharing time. Ed was often leading that time and never once tried to berate her or shush her but responded only with grace and love, and she couldn't speak highly enough about him.

"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism," Peter says in Acts 10, as God extends his beautiful salvation to everyone everywhere.

And here are a few verses from Peter's writings in 1 Peter that I think especially describe Ed:

1 Peter 4:8-10: Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received *to serve others*, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 5:1-3: To the elders among you [and Ed was an elder at one point], I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but *eager to serve*; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

Ed was so eager to serve, always. Serving others sprang from deep in his heart and gave him great joy. And Peter continues in verse 4: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away." [Looking up:] Ed, enjoy that crown of glory so well deserved!

Perhaps a good word for Ed was boy-ishness. The scriptures say unless you come as a child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, and Ed had that enthusiastic and adventuresome spirit, that fresh and trusting spirit, that marks a child. Some of you remember his Elf solar-powered bike. He would come to men's prayer and give us updates on where he was on the waiting list and when he was expecting to get it. And when he did get it, wow, his excitement probably exceeded that of most children on Christmas. That was Ed. What a dear warm-hearted, big-hearted man.

Finally, what most impressed me was his love for prayer. Whether it was our prayer during sharing time, Wednesday night prayer, or Saturday morning men's prayer, he was there and ready to bear others' burdens, to encourage and protect the flock, as it were. Even as his illness crept up on him and his speech became slow and labored, he would still labor in prayer. To think of this man of action so very slowed down by his disease was sad, to be sure, but also inspiring as he pressed on in Jesus' name.

After a solid hour of prayer at the men's prayer meeting, we would reward ourselves for our hard work and head to Merk's restaurant for breakfast. What great conversations, what laughter, what further bearing of one another's burdens. Ed was right there at the center. Lots of stories I could tell about how he befriended all of us during that very special fellowship meal, his love and concern.

One fun story I'll mention tells of his love for strawberry jam. Merk's kept a holder of various jams on the table, and if you wanted any strawberry for yourself you had to grab what you could before he grabbed it. Otherwise you got stuck with grape or apple. So we might say Ed was generous and big-hearted about everything except strawberry jam. Anyway, so much joy and delight we shared!

I think as you remember Ed, he would want you to remember him as a sinner saved by grace, as someone who loved Jesus with all his heart. And yes, as someone who couldn't wait to jump up and get to work, whatever work needed doing, spreading the good news of Jesus through word and deed, then resting for just a bit with friends and a good strawberry biscuit or two. Don't just enjoy warm thoughts about him. Let him inspire you as part of that great cloud of witnesses who goes before us and points the way to eternal life.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for the inspiration of Ed's life. Thank you for bringing him to Yourself many years ago, and for how he persevered in his walk with You. Thank you for gifting him in so many areas, for his love and laughter, for the way he served others so exuberantly, so faithfully. As the old hymn says, "I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift." May we be inspired to do the same, through the same Spirit that guided and inspired him. Amen.