

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
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We really didn't know what to do. I mean, what do you do? We knew that he was going to die. He had been talking about it. Everyone kind of new that it would happen. But you never really can fully prepare yourself for a major life disruption, certainly a death, right?

We all loved him. We were ready, but we weren't ready. And now he was gone.

1996 – It was the year that dad had died.

It was the week before finals of my junior year, my second year at Virginia Seminary. I was in the midst of studying, when I got the phone call from mom. Dad was starting to deteriorate more rapidly from the lung cancer.

He had been through radiation, and then later had one lung removed. We were crossing our fingers, praying that God would heal him. And he did, until he didn't. Dad lasted about two years after the diagnosis. And then, it was time to book a flight from Virginia to Denver, as soon as possible. The professors all agreed that I should go home and be with my family. We would work out finals upon my return.

Dad was one of those people who went to church on Easter and Christmas because mom wanted him to go. Don't get me wrong, he was very loving and provided for us. It was interesting though. Near the end of his life, I discovered that he had been reading this book by Roman Catholic Theologian, Henri Nouwen, titled, *On Death and Dying*. He was circling key phrases about faith and life and death and what comes after death. The irony was that this man who wasn't much of a religious man, was pretty much at peace with his death and after-death, and was at peace with what he believed.

And now, it was our turn. We had to prepare ourselves for the loss. And then, he was gone.

No matter how much preparation we had done, we had discovered that there really is no way to fully prepare. When he died, it was still devastating.

Immediately upon his death, I will never forget, my Mom got on top of him, on top of his lifeless body, and began to kiss him and kiss him. And she said, "My honey, my honey, my sweetie, don't go, don't go. No." And she cried and cried.

I was stoic. The floodgates of tears would come later for me. It was time to take care of mom and take care of details. The funeral company would be coming soon to take him away. Take him away – what a strange event, someone taking away the person we all loved, the person who loved us.

Next, we had to figure out how to continue, how to continue without him in our lives. In some ways, we were in denial. We were sad, angry, in a place of disarray, a mix of emotions. Probably not too unlike what the disciples were going through when Jesus, who was their Christ, their Savior, their friend, when Jesus had died. They were bewildered and had to figure out how to keep on living without him.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken us? How could you have allowed this to happen? Jesus had said that this would not be the end, that he would rise up on the last day. But death is death. It is sudden. It does not feel right or good.

Oh sure - I will tell you that he is in a much better place. And he is. But I still miss him. He is not here.

And now I have to figure out, now *we* have to figure out how to keep going. It is finished, and now we continue with only the Spirit of Jesus, with memories. They are not the same though.

Oh God, we hope and pray for resurrection, for eternal life, as Jesus had promised. We ask that this not be the end. We trust in God. We trust that Jesus will be alive.

But for now, we are just sad. We are in grief, and there is no easy way around grief, is there? It has its own time. Be not far from us Lord. Be not far.