

The Book of Common Prayer says that the service of Burial is an Easter service.

We are here to celebrate a life well-lived. Today we're asked to celebrate a life short-lived with happy songs and Alleluias. We're asked to do that with aching hearts and tear-filled eyes.

God. It isn't fair.

It isn't fair that someone so beautiful, so intelligent, so talented should be gone so soon.

It isn't fair that parents must witness their children's funerals. It's supposed to be the other way around.

It isn't fair that children experience this deep loss so early in his life.

Scripture says that God sends rain to the just as well as the unjust. Cancer happens to the poor, the rich, the smart and the not so smart, the doctor and the plumber. The disease doesn't care who you are. That's what makes it so horrible.

Friends, I'm here to tell you that, in the end, cancer doesn't win. God wins. Love wins. We know that God cares who we are. God cares for Toks. God cares for Toyin and Tim and Toria. God cares for Oliver and all of you who were touched by Toks' life and ministry among you.

Toks is in a place where she is healed and whole and surrounded by love. We know this because Jesus promised this to all of us. "In my Father's house are many rooms." "I go to prepare a place for you." For each of us, there awaits a place where the struggles of this life are no more.

We know this not only because Christ told his disciples long ago. We know this because we experience it throughout our lives.

Reflect for a moment upon your life so far. Remember those times when there was a struggle to do better, to endure harder, to be faithful where you may have been at the end of your rope. The fact that you are here says that something happened to help you cross the gap between what was and what could be.

Theologians call this the Holy Spirit.

I'm confident that Toks felt the Holy Spirit lifting her up as she studied and eventually became a doctor.

I'm sure she felt that spirit as she worked with children who were in crisis.

I am convinced that the Holy Spirit took her by the hand and guided her into her new life in God's nearer presence.

There may appear to be a gap between this eternity and the next, but we are not so far away from each other. Our spirits continue to be a part of Toks' as hers is a part of ours. Today, we will gather to break bread around the Lord's Table. We'll share a foretaste of the banquet to come. Remember that we are on one end of a table that stretches into eternity and that Toks is feasting with us, as are all those whom we love but see no longer.

Christians believe that the way of God, the way of Love, manifested in the life of Jesus the Christ, provides for us life eternal. Today, we all share side of eternity that we can see.

Eventually, we will all share the eternity we cannot see, the eternity that Toks dwells in right now. An eternity where there is no strife, no hunger, no thirst, no tears. We will be together again. Jesus promised. There is a place for Toks and there will be a space for you and me.

That is why this day we make our song Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Amen.