



## PHILIPPIANS 1:20,21 | Take Courage! This is a No-Lose Situation!

*Friday, January 9, 2015 – The Funeral of Richard Pieschke*

Richard was born Oct. 16, 1931, in Willow Lake, S.D., to Albert and Lily Pieschke. He served in the U.S. Marines from 1952 until 1954. Richard married Eleanor Kuehl on March 16, 1954, at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in Huron, S.D. They lived in Rapid City, S.D., from 1954 until 1966 and moved to Blair, then Hastings before settling in Kearney in 2013.

Richard was a truck driver for many years and retired in 1988. He was a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Hastings and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Kearney. He delivered Meals On Wheels for 14 years while he lived in Hastings. Richard and Eleanor enjoyed several years of traveling in the winter months, spending time with family and playing cards.

Richard was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Donald.

Survivors include his wife, Eleanor Pieschke of Kearney; daughter and son-in-law, Pam and Dann Glendenning of Kearney; son and daughter-in-law, Wes and Sue Pieschke of Eagle; 4 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren; 4 brothers and 4 sisters.

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*<sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*

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It's not easy saying goodbye. I remember sitting in Richard and Eleanor's living room a month ago when Richard gave me the news: "The doctors say that it isn't good," he said with tears in his eyes. "They said that I should start to prepare for the end..." And a conversation then ensued. I asked about funeral preparations and a will. I asked about his thoughts on lessons and hymns. And I asked him what he felt his faith was like. "I'm not worried for me," he said. "I know what's going to happen to me...it's my family that I'm concerned about."

Courage. That's what I saw that day. A man who knew what life was like. He knew the things he had done in his life. He was well-aware of the sins he had committed during his days on this earth. He admitted them to me last Friday morning. As I prepared to give him communion, I asked him if he heartily repented of those sins of which he knew, and those of which he did not. And with a firm, "Yes." he once again showed his courage.

It was another conversation I had with Richard, this time when he was in extreme pain. As he was there, holding my hand, we talked about what Christian faith truly was. And I made the point that a Christian's life is a life of practice—it's not until you face severe trial, even death, that you even get to use what you've learned. He chuckled and nodded his head. "It's hard," he said, "but I know who my Savior is." Courage.

Today is hard, too. It's difficult standing before the casket of a loved one—a husband, a father, a grandfather, an uncle, a brother, a friend. It's hard because it makes us realize the brevity of life. It forces the thought into our mind that one day that could be us, it could be my wife, my husband, my son, my daughter. It forces us to look at death head-on. And it forces me to realize how woefully inadequate I am to face it. It takes courage. Oh, it's easy for us to say the words, "I believe in Jesus Christ..." It's easy for us to sing and to chant and to respond and to worship. But when staring death in the face, how will we respond? How courageous will we be?

I'm sure it wasn't easy for Richard. But he had courage. It wasn't because of his disposition or his demeanor. It wasn't because he was just a "brave guy." He had courage because he knew Christ. He knew that despite his shortcomings, despite his sins, despite the mistakes he made, he knew that Christ had paid for them. He knew that Jesus' death was enough. He knew that the words of Paul rang true: "As always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

He knew what he was leaving behind. It mattered so much to him. It brought tears of sadness to his eyes. But most of all he knew what was waiting for him. He knew the glories that God had prepared for him. He knew there was a mansion in the sky made ready for him. He knew that to continue living in this body of sin was fine—but to die in the Lord was even better.

My dear friends, take courage. Take courage not because that's what Richard did. Take courage not because it's the stoic thing to do. Take courage because those promises of Christ are true for you, too. Take courage because this death is a no-lose situation—for you and for Richard. Imagine the shock and awe he experienced as, in the blink of an eye, he suddenly stood in perfection—no pain, no tears, no sadness. There was no loss for him, only gain. He gained heaven. And the same promise is true for you. Take courage. You will see him again someday. Take courage. You will stand with him again, someday.

Before he died, these words were spoken to him: "Child of God, heaven is open. Go forth in the name of the Father almighty who created you; in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who redeemed you; in the name of the Holy Spirit who called you to faith. May you rest in peace and live forever in the blessings of heaven." While your time may not have come, I give the same encouragement to you today: "Dear friends, go forth in the name of the Father who created you; in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God who redeemed you; in the name of the Holy Spirit who called you to faith. May you live in peace knowing that Richard is living forever in the blessings of heaven." Amen.



*Soli Deo Gloria!*

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