**Prepared to Die**

Based on [John 11:17-27](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn11.17-27)
Preached on April 14, 2018

The Christian Funeral Service of Wib Haufe

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Listening to the news of the past week, one can’t help but hear repeated coverage of the tragic bus crash that killed and injured so many people, most of them young men having barely reached adulthood. **And it’s hard to hear about it. It’s hard, not only because so many young men in the prime of their lives--talented men with the world at their fingertips--died at an untimely age.** That ***is*** hard to think about…but it’s not what I’m talking about here. What is hard is to have to hear about all the death over and over again without ever hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Instead, we hear reporters grasp at straws for a silver lining. The media will talk about the victims’ lives--how they were caring men (and one woman) who made a real difference in the world. And though they are gone, we are assured that they will live on in the lives they impacted here…and that’s supposed to offer some relief.

**…So that some good can come out of tragedy, someone started a fundraiser.** And inspired by the example of one young victim, more people are becoming registered organ donors…so that’s good. But there’s just no way the memory or social impact of the victims can come close to atonement for what has happened. Neither the largest fundraiser in Canadian history, nor a massive spike in organ donorship can bring amends to this massive tragedy.

In the midst of loss, there is no comfort to afford in keeping our thoughts on earth. In the wake of tragedy, the earthly-minded can only concede the victory to death, and says to those who mourn “Let them eat cake.” But isn’t there some better news?

In the Gospel according to John, Martha’s brother Lazarus died from some sudden illness. Jesus went to Martha and spoke to her about her brother’s death. He **didn’t tell her how much of an inspiration Lazarus was when he lived.** He didn’t talk about the lives Lazarus impacted, or how he will live on in their memories. As far as I know Lazarus wasn’t given a fundraiser, nor had he signed his organ donor card. But such things don’t seem to matter to Jesus. He doesn’t need to make lemonade out of lemons. Instead, he has really has good news to tell her--news that makes an eternal difference even for her dead brother. Jesus says, “**Your brother will rise again**.” And he says, “**I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.**”

For nearly 2000 years now, death has been swallowed up in victory, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the midst of tragedy and death why doesn’t the media report about how death has been defeated? Why doesn’t CBC report how there is now no condemnation for those who believe and death has lost its sting? In the midst of mortal tragedy, why doesn’t Global News report thanks and praise to God for offering his son as a sacrifice for our sins, yours mine, a bus full of young men?

When death occurs, reporters should also report on the Good News of Jesus Christ. I am called here today to report on the death of Wib Haufe. And here’s the story: Wib’s death was “tragedy averted”, it was averted many years ago, when he was baptized into Christ. **On that day he received life insurance from the Holy Spirit--a guarantee that when death would take his mortal body, he would not die eternally but be saved through faith in Jesus Christ.**

Wilbert Haufe has been ***prepared to die*** since the moment he was born again in Baptism, and that made all the difference in the life he lived. It meant that he was ***prepared to die*** when he served his country with courage and valor during the war. He was ***prepared to die*** when he married Helen, taking a vow to love her as Christ loved the church, and sacrifice himself for her. He was ***prepared to die*** when they made a home and a family together. And it is because he was prepared to die that he was gifted to live his life in the Spirit of Christ.

In Christ, Wib’s bore the fruit of the Spirit in his life, especially the fruit of peace and patience. When there was a project to do, he never simply jumped into it. **Those who know him know he approached everything with calculation and care.** Patience is a mark of someone who trusts God extends his providential involvement and care over all things. “Unless the Lord is builds the house, the builders labour in vain” (Psalm 127:1). That’s why God set apart a Sabbath day, and prepares for his people a Sabbath rest in Christ. Not only that we can rest from our labours, but rest assured in them that God works all things for the good of those who love Him.

Wib had the patience to plan his projects and built things to last. I’m told the deck he built on his old house would outlast the house. That’s a good metaphor for who Wib is, because h**e approached eternal life the same way. He built his life on Christ, who is the only one who will stand in the judgment and outlast the world.** Heaven and earth will pass away, but on the word of the Lord endures forever.

In this life, Wib also had a profound understanding of Christian Stewardship, and saw how stewardship was fundamental to understanding God’s will for our lives. As Genesis tells us, the first man and woman were stewards of the earth; that they proved unfaithful with what God gave them in trust. **They turned from God and their negligence damaged not only them, but all of what He so lovingly created.** And we are born with their sin, share in their sin by nature, and live lives that will know tragedy, and death. We broke God’s law and his creation and are broken ourselves.

**I’m told Wib didn’t throw out broken things. He was a Fix It guy, he fixed things that probably didn’t seem worth repairing. God is the same way.** He didn’t scrap his broken creation and start over. He didn’t discard sinners as damaged goods. He fixed what his careless stewards had broken. He made atonement, rebuilt his relationship with the world by sending his son Jesus Christ. His blood repaired the relationship between us and God.

**The world is still broken, we who have been given the Spirit through faith are entrusted again as stewards of his creation--to love one another, to bear burdens, turn the other cheek, take up our cross and ever praising God for the joy that awaits us.**  He entrusts believers with a new heart and a willing spirit, and gives us an example in Jesus Christ, who is now ascended to the right hand of the father, and to whom God has entrusted all things, Amen.

Death is still a tragedy for some, for those who reject Christ to find salvation from the world. May they be given faith to see the vanity of worldly hope, and turn to Christ. But there is Good News here today. **In baptism, God entrusted his servant Wib into the care of his victorious Son, Jesus Christ.**  And in faith, Wib entrusted his life to Christ. In dying, Christ has destroyed death, and in rising again he has taken Wib to paradise. And there he is at peace, it is well with his soul. And the good work that was begun in Wibs earthly life, God will bring it to completion on the Last day when he will raise Wib and all the dead, and give eternal life to him and all believers in Christ.

(Let us pray)

*And, Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight, The clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend; Even so it is well with my soul.*