

“Chipping out of the Bunker”

For the memorial service of Edward Carroll Meseck

October 2, 2007

John 14: 1-6

Maria Hoecker, preacher.

We are gathered today to celebrate and remember the life of Ed Meseck. In a few moments you will hear some remembrances from Ed’s friend, Manny Barboza and Ed and Mary’s sons, Ted and Andy . I stand here to give witness about Ed’s life too. Ed’s life in Christ.

And believe it or not, I’m going to talk a bit about golf. As you all know. Ed was an avid golfer, in fact he just finished up a term as president of the Connestee’s Golf Association. Now you may wonder what I could possibly have to say about Golf and Jesus, but I do have a thought or two to offer up this afternoon. I come from a golfing family, even though I rarely hit the links myself. So, here we go, this one’s for Ed.

As many of you know, the oldest golf tournament in the world is the British Open. The tournament has been played at thirteen different courses since it began in 1860 but the most famous of the courses is the “Old Course” in St. Andrews, Scotland.

Possibly the most notable characteristic of the “Old Course” at St. Andrews are its bunkers or sand traps. Bunkers are a normal part of any golf course, but the ones at St. Andrews are the epitome of all others! The legend is that the bunkers were originally places that sheep would bed down for the night. They are more than simply an indentation in the course filled with sand like most courses in the U.S. They are deep holes with nearly vertical walls and sand at the bottom.

When one plays a round of golf it is inevitable that a ball is going to go into the bunker. A ball in a bunker can tell us something about the Christian walk. If you want to hit your ball out of a bunker, you need to get your feet set so they are as solid as can be in the shifting sand. You need to have the proper club to get out of the bunker. And you need to open your stance and swing all the way through with the ball.

Because bunkers are filled with sand, the footing can be tricky. Sand is definitely not a firm foundation on which to walk (or build a house – see Matthew 7:24-27). As we face the shifting sands of this world, we need to be grounded in the truth of God’s Word. It doesn’t change, it is rock solid. If we set our Christian walk on the firm ground of God’s Word – we’ll find our way out of the rough and those shifting, sandy traps.

In our Christian walk-- a fair Way, if you will-- we also need to open ourselves up to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We need to “follow through with our swing” by using God’s Word and Sacraments and keep on using them regularly. There’s a lot to be learned about the Christian walk from golf, whether you love the game as Ed Meseck did or whether you consider the game of golf “a good walk spoiled”!

Ed died before any of us were ready for it. The events of these past few days are a vivid reminder for all of us that we know not the day nor hour of our departure from this life. Yet, Ed prepared for his death in a myriad of ways, the fruits of which are evident today and will live on for years to come. Ed and Mary lived in the Brevard community for only ten years, yet look at all of their many friends here today. Ed and Mary knew and know about the importance of community and family. They demonstrated the importance of being in relationship with others through shared worship, prayer, play, and active work in the world.

Ed made it a priority to feed people at our Sunday breakfasts, and to help maintain our buildings and grounds. It wasn't all work, as Manny will share with you in a few moments, it was fun too. And Ed and Mary, after 48 years of marriage have a strong family that will continue to sustain Mary through the dark days of numb grief. There is a family that can laugh together, as you'll also hear from Ed and Mary's sons in a few moments .

Ed made some good friends along the way . Many of his friends and family took delight in his keen sense of humor. His last words to me were in jest as he and Mary went through the Sunday line of greeters after church last week. I preached a sermon about letting go of debts that are owed us--erasing zeros that represent burdensome debts for others. "Does that mean I don't have to pay my pledge to the church?" he kidded with me after the service.

Ed was lively right up to his last day. He had his bags packed for a trip to Colorado, he and Mary were planning to leave the next day. Instead on that day of anticipated travel, we were planning Ed's funeral and his family was flying in to be with Mary. It's a little bit troubling to think that we might not have any warning that we're near to drawing our last breath. How many of us can say that we have our own bags packed and ready to go?

In our Gospel reading today we have here a remedy against the troubled thoughts of our own mortality. It is quite simple, *Believe*. By believing in Christ as the Mediator and Advocate between us and God, we can draw comfort in the reality of our own certain death. The happiness of heaven is that we will dwell in our Father's house. There are rooms prepared for all of us. Christ will be the Finisher of that which he began at Creation; if he has prepared a place for us, we can be assured that he will prepare *us* for that Place.

It is through Christ that we will find our Way to heaven. He is the Truth, when we believe we can find our Way to him. Jesus Christ is the Life, by whose life-giving Spirit the dead will find new life. Through Christ, our prayers go to God, and his blessings come back to us. It pulls us out of those deep dark bunkers--those sand pits that trap sheep-- and it brings us into the Light, onto those immaculate grass greens. Christ is the Resurrection and the Life.

That's the good news we proclaim on this day of Ed Meseck's celebration of life and the burial of his remains. What remains of Ed will never die. Ed knew love, Ed loved . Through Jesus Christ, Love endures. The stories of love we share along the way will keep us forever connected in this life and in the life to come. As we continue our walk with Christ, each morning we start out as everyone else does – being called to faith through the working of the Holy Spirit through water and the Word. Through the amazing grace of God, all we have to do is believe, work on our follow-through, and keep walking along the Way.

Thanks be to God.

(idea for golf metaphor from True Men Ministries, Inc. <http://www.truemen.org/golf4.html>)