

**To Those Whom I Love
and Those Who Love Me**

Mary Alice Ramish

When I am gone, release me, let me go -
I have so many things to see and do.
You must not tie yourself to me with tears,
Be happy that we had so many years.

I gave you my love, you can only guess,
How much you gave me in happiness.
I thank you for the love you each have shown.
But now it is time I travelled on alone.

So grieve a while for me, if grieve you must -
then let your grief be comforted by trust.
It is only for a while that we must part,
So bless the memories within your heart.

I will not be far away for life goes on -
So if you need me, call and I will come.
Though you cannot see or touch me, I will be near.
And if you listen with your heart, you will hear
All of my love around you soft and clear.

Then, when you must come this way alone,
I will greet you with a smile and a "Welcome Home."

He/She Is Gone

by David Harkins

You can shed tears that he/she has gone,
Or you can laugh and smile that he/she has lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that he'll/she'll come back
or you can open your eyes and see all that he's/she's left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see him/her,
or you can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember only that he/she has gone,
or you can cherish his/her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind,
be empty and turn your back,
or we can do what he/she would want:
Smile, Open Your Eyes, Love and Go On.



A SELECTION OF READINGS FOR USE AT FUNERALS

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A selection of reading suitable for use at Funerals

From the Old Testament

Job 19:1,23-27a

Job said: "O that my words were written down! O that they were inscribed in a book! O that with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved on a rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. (NRSV)

Wisdom 3:1-6,9

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect. (NRSV)

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (NRSV)

Lamentations 3:17-26

My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, "Gone is my glory, and all that I had hoped for from the LORD." The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. (NRSV)

Wisdom 4:7-15

The righteous, though they die early, will be at rest. For old age is not honored for length of time, or measured by number of years; but understanding is gray hair for anyone, and a blameless life is ripe old age. There were some who pleased God and were loved by him,

Footprints in the Sand

One night a man had a dream. He dreamt that he was walking along a beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed the scenes of his life. For each scene he noticed not one but two sets of footprints in the sand. He understood immediately that one belonged to him, and the other to the Lord.

But then he noticed a curious thing. At the lowest and saddest times in his life there was only one set of footprints. This bothered him, so he asked the Lord: 'How come that during the most difficult times in my life, the very times when I most needed you, you left me on my own?'

Then the Lord replied: 'My friend, during your trials and sufferings, when you see only one set of footprints, those footprints are mine. It was then that I carried you.'

From A Hebrew Prayer

For each of us life is like a journey. Birth is the beginning of this journey, and death is not the end but the destination.

It is a journey that takes us from youth to age, from innocence to awareness, from ignorance to knowledge, from foolishness to wisdom, from weakness to strength and often back again, from offence to forgiveness, from loneliness to friendship, from pain to compassion, from fear to faith, from defeat to victory and from victory to defeat, until, looking backward or ahead, we see that victory does not lie at some high point along the way, but in having made the journey, stage by stage.

Gone only from Our Sight

I am standing on the seashore. Suddenly a ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze, and starts out for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she is only a ribbon of white cloud just above where sea and sky mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says: 'There! She's gone!'

Gone where? Gone from my sight - that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her, and just at the moment when someone at my side says: 'There! She's gone!' there are other voices ready to take the glad shout, 'Here she comes!'
And that is death.

Walking in Beauty and Wisdom

O Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to the world, hear me.

I come to you as one of your many children. I am small and weak. I need your strength and your wisdom.

May I walk in beauty. Make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made, and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may know the things you have taught your children, the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

Make me strong, so that I may not be superior to other people, but able to fight my greatest enemy, which is myself.

Make me ever ready to come to you with straight eyes, so that when life fades as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame

The Broken Chain

We little knew that morning that God was going to call your name,
In life we loved you dearly, in death we do the same.
It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go alone,
For part of us went with you, the day God called you home.
You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide,
And though we cannot see you, you are always at our side.
Our family chain is broken, and nothing seems the same,
But as God calls us one by one, the chain will link again.

Miss Me - But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road
And the sun has set for me
I want no rites in a gloom filled room
Why cry for a soul set free?

Miss me a little, but not too long
And not with your head bowed low
Remember the love that we once shared
Miss me but let me go.

For this is a journey that we all must take
And each must go alone
It's all a part of a greater plan
a step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and sick at heart
Go to the friends we know
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds
Miss me, but let me go.

When Death Will Knock at Your Door

By Tagore. From *Gitanjali*

On the day when death will knock at your door what will you offer to him? Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life. I will never let him go with empty hands. All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

Ready for the Journey

By Tagore. From *Gitanjali*

I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers. I bow to you all and take my departure. Here I give back the keys of my door, and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you. We were neighbours for long, but I have received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

and while living among sinners were taken up. They were caught up so that evil might not change their understanding or guile deceive their souls. For the fascination of wickedness obscures what is good, and roving desire perverts the innocent mind. Being perfected in a short time, they fulfilled long years; for their souls were pleasing to the Lord, therefore he took them quickly from the midst of wickedness. Yet the peoples saw and did not understand, or take such a thing to heart, that God's grace and mercy are with his elect, and that he watches over his holy ones. (NRSV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.

New Testament Readings

1 Corinthians 15:20-24a,25-28

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection," it is plain that this does not include the one who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all. (NRSV)

Philippians 3:20-21

Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (NRSV)

1 John 3:14-16

We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us -- and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. (NRSV)

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."

Gospel readings

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. (NRSV)

John 6:37-40

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." (NRSV)

John 12:24-28

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say -- 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (NRSV)

John 14:1-6

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (NRSV)

Non-Biblical Readings

I Did Not Die

by Melinda Sue Pacho

Do not stand at my grave and forever weep.

I am not there; I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush

I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and forever cry.

I am not there. I did not die.