

Philip D. Moyers
March 31, 2021

On a day like today when we have gathered to remember Phil – husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend, neighbor, fellow volunteer, church member – it is difficult to remember anything but the question that is on all of our hearts since last Thursday morning. *Why?* *Why* will be the question on all of your minds for some time. *Why* would such a loving, funny and gentle man's life end too soon? *Why him?* *Why now?* After a lifetime of good health and maturing so gracefully, why would he lose his life now? It's not fair. It's not time. It doesn't make sense. We do not understand.

I can't give you a satisfying answer for those questions, because there isn't one. Why does cancer take one and not another? Our minds tell us that the author of Ecclesiastes knew of what he wrote when he said, "*for everything there is a season – and a time for every matter under heaven...*" It makes sense that our lives will end. It is part of the natural cycle of things. Phil knew it from his childhood on the farm, as he watched calves being born – some thriving, some not. He knew it in his bones as the wheat was planted, and harvested, then ground into flour to make bread for people he never met. We know all these things just as Phil knew them. But it doesn't take away the pain of the wind being knocked out of you – the empty space in your hearts and your homes – or the grieving that comes now in wave after wave. But there will come a day when you realize, "*today it didn't hurt so badly to miss him.*" And then, there will be ample time to share the stories of the place he held in each of your hearts.

Why? I don't know. But I do know one thing - God did not *take* him, but God has got him...the same God that knit him together in his mother's womb. The same God who loved him as his precious child. The same God who delighted in Phil from the first, because God was the one who made the very blueprint for the man we all knew and loved. Writer Wendell Berry wrote about men like Phil in his poem, *The Man Born to Farming*:

The Grower of Trees, the gardener, the man born to farming, whose hands
reach into the ground and sprout - to him the soil is a divine drug.
He enters into death yearly and comes back rejoicing.
He has seen the light lie down in the dung heap and rise again in the corn.
His thought passes along the row-ends like a mole.
What miraculous seed has he swallowed
That the unending sentence of his love flows out of his mouth
Like a vine clinging in the sunlight,
and like water descending in the dark?

Phil was born in Oklahoma and grew up on the farm in Drummond, always healthy, always strong. You might say those early days in the sun rooted him - not only in the earth of God's good creation – but also in the qualities that would result in a life well-lived. He was surrounded by siblings – four to be exact – and he was the baby of the family. Phil was honest, hardworking, and would drop anything at a moment's notice for anyone who needed a hand. He did not complain, ever, nor did he use foul language, and even though he never went barefoot, he loved the ocean and beach walks. And he knew how to have fun - sometimes he even shared that knowledge – through his dry sense of humor. His comic timing. His quick wit. His unexpected and disarming one-line zingers, and a sometimes

surprising outlook on life. Pam told me, “*you had to listen to him, or you’d miss what came out of his mouth.*” And by that she meant pearls of wisdom, good humor and love for his family and friends. So, it is not surprising that everybody who knew him, loved him.

When he retired, 2 ½ years ago, everyone thought he’d go nuts (or drive Pam crazy) just hanging out at home. He had worked hard for so long, but had also felt the stresses of the workplace. So it was time for retirement. And much to everyone’s surprise – he loved it! He volunteered at the Arboretum; had coffee with the neighborhood guys and joined a regular Bible study here at Advent. He spent hours taking care of his garden and feeding the birds. And in return he received owls and lots of cardinals among his flocks. But it wasn’t all idyllic. Phil hated snakes. He waged more than one battle royale with rabbits and he was not a big fan of dogs (nobody’s perfect.)

But perhaps best of all, in retirement he could spend relaxed and precious time enjoying his family – that he made always made sure ate dinner together when they were growing up – and now with their spouses and his children’s children. Pam and Phil would have celebrated their 45th anniversary in few weeks. His grandkids would have looked for him at their games and performances, just like he was always involved with Hank and Megan sports teams. Phil would have been there. He would have continued to encourage everyone to put on some socks. Because the people he cared for were the most important thing in his life – be they family or friend, he touched so many throughout the years.

Today we are in the midst of two major festivals of freedom: Passover for the Jews, marking the escape from slavery and Holy Week for Christians, celebrating our salvation from the bondage to sin and death. To honor Phil’s new freedom life, I’d like to conclude with a beautiful prayer that is a meditation for those who mourn:

When I die, give what’s left of me away
to children and old men that wait to die.
And if you need to cry,
cry for your brother walking the streets beside you.
And when you need me, put your arms around anyone
and give them what you need to give me.

I want to leave you something,
something better than words or sounds.
Look for me in the people I’ve known or loved,
and if you cannot give me away,
at least let me live in your eyes and not in your mind.

You can love me best by letting hands touch hands,
and by letting go of children that need to be free.
Love doesn’t die, people do.
So, when all that’s left of me is love, give me away.*
**Kaddish Yatom – Mourner’s Kaddish (Meditations before Kaddish)*

Thank you for the privilege of honoring Phil during this Holy Week. May your grief be dimmed in the promise of Resurrection, and of the great Reunion in our heavenly home.

Pastor Susan Langhauser, Advent Lutheran Church, Olathe, KS

OBITUARY

Philip D. Moyers, 67, of Stilwell, KS passed Thursday March 25, 2021 at Overland Park Regional Medical Center. A celebration of his life will be held at 10 a.m., March 31st, at Advent Lutheran Church.

Phil was born May 22, 1953 in Enid Oklahoma to Raymond and Mary Catherine Moyers. He graduated from Oklahoma State University and had a successful career in the Agricultural Insurance business. Phil retired in 2018 and immensely enjoyed his retirement. He led an active life by walking every day, volunteering at the Overland Park Arboretum and gardening in his own backyard. Phil was a member of Advent Lutheran Church.

Phil will be remembered for so many amazing qualities. He was a wonderful husband and supportive father. His children always knew that he loved them and was incredibly proud of them. They knew they could always come to him for help. Phil was hardworking and said, "if you are going to do something, do it right the first time." Phil had a quiet, dry humor that we all enjoyed. He always had a good one liner if you listened close enough. Some of the things we will most remember was his humor, his beautiful penmanship, always playing around the yard and his energizer bunny energy. Phil always had to make sure everyone's feet were warm. He loved to go to garden nurseries with his son and help his son in law on his many construction projects, but maybe not the decks. He will always be known to his grandchildren as "Orange Papa" because of his love of Oklahoma State. We will affectionately remember holidays that were spent together and our family trip to Sanibel Island in 2017. Phil loved the ocean and wonderful memories were made on that trip.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Connie Hitchcock.

He is survived by his wife of nearly 45 years Pam A. Moyers, his children Henry V. Moyers and his wife Emily Moyers and Megan L. Watt and her husband Josh Watt, who he affectionately referred to as his "electrician friend". Grandchildren Addyson Moyers (12), Jacob Watt (11), Lorelei Watt (9) Emma Moyers (7) and Cael Watt (6). Siblings Steve Moyers and Caroline Jones.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to Heart to Heart International or the Wounded Warrior Project. Phil respected both of these foundations and the work they did around the world.

