

Celebration of the Resurrection in the Life of Marquis L. Ward April 9, 2021 - 2:30 p.m.

Marquis L. Ward was the perfect balance of Law and Gospel. He began his life with God through the waters of baptism shortly after he was born in Cloquet, Minnesota. From that day forward, Mark was claimed forever by God, and it is the knowledge of that promise in which we rejoice today.

Though he accomplished a tremendous amount in his 89 years among us, Mark might have been thought to be a sort of "late bloomer." Like many others of the northern European heritage, Mark was a relatively quiet man, and if you noted the dates in his obituary, you might have realized that he had already reached the ripe old age of 30 before he married Kay and settled down in Montevideo (see, your Mom Kay taught me how to say that correctly...) By then he had served in the military and had developed a keen sense of decorum which served him well in his years as a lawyer and a judge.

But there was always that twinkle in his eye, which told anyone who was paying attention that *rules* and *love* really could be mixed into the same person. His daughters told me of the times he would take them to the courthouse and let them pretend to be lawyers and judges and any other courtroom persona they wanted to try on. He loved his work. He loved his family. And when the time passed and his daughters started their own families, he loved, loved, loved his grandchildren. Let's just say it was clear that he adored you all.

Mark was a foody. He was a baker, especially of sweets, which endeared him to anyone who taste-tested his confections. He was fond of going out to dine in wonderful restaurants, sampling fine foods and especially relishing the sweets. "*Life is uncertain, eat dessert first,*" could easily have been his motto in life.

When they first moved to Olathe, the Wards attended church regularly, for the most part, and rarely missed our Advent and Lenten season vesper services. Mark was a particular fan of *Holden Evening Prayer* by Marty Haugen, and always thanked me for using that liturgy season after season. And while he never hooked into our Bible Study groups as Kay had, he read through the Bible every year. At least 40 times. In a different translation or version each time he read it. The man clearly loved knowledge, and that great story.

In the past decade, since his beloved Kay died suddenly, Mark had apparently decided that he would make the most of the time he had left. So, he returned to a former love - music - and taught himself to play the piano. He progressed quickly, I'm told, from the "Teaching Little Fingers to Play" beginners' book to classical music that seemed to fill in a place that had been missing the music. He loved to play his own concerts filled with Mendelssohn and Debussy, simply for his own enjoyment.

He studied Russian, and worked crossword puzzles every day. In fact, if he did **not** pick up his puzzles of a morning, the family knew he wasn't feeling well. His mind was sharp and his intellect never dulled. In fact, when I asked his daughters to describe him in a few words each, they answered with "he was so incredibly smart," "he was a very sweet man," and "he was the picture of unconditional love." Not a bad review for a grandfather and father, a husband and brother, an uncle and friend, a neighbor and pillar of the community.

Mark had an uncanny way of mixing the ups and downs of life together - he was prone to bottling up whatever was burdening him until he "blew up," - but he only shared the strong emotions couched as "disappointment" at someone's actions. It was rare for him to release his anger on others. And then, there was always that keen wit and unexpected turn of phrase that was so disarming, close at hand. The combination was a delicate balance, and he pulled it off with charm and amazing grace.

As his life was winding down, he once again leaned on his great mind and decided to submit himself to clinical trials at the Mayo Clinic. I can just imagine that he figured he would either be cured, or if not, he would be a good example for the research and eventual information that would contribute to data that would provide hope for someone else down the line. What a magnificent service to humanity - selfless, even. In a different life circumstance, Mark could have been a pastor. In fact, he told his girls as much - that he had actually thought about it. If he'd had another 10 years, I believe he could have done it.

But for now, we simply hold on to all the wonderful parts of Mark. Sharon shared that at one very low point in his treatment she told him I was praying for him. And he smiled that smile we will all remember with love. But now, we can remember him smiling at Kay, and all those of his loved ones who have entered Eternity before him. Mark was ready. He knew what he had done and what he had left undone, and he had made peace with his life among us - the Law and the Gospel. He knew which one holds the better power. It makes me think of the song we sang for Kay at her funeral, *I'll Fly Away*.

“Some glad morning when this life is o’er, I’ll fly away
 To a home on God’s celestial shore, I’ll fly away
 When the shadows of this life have gawn, I’ll fly away
 Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I’ll fly away
 Just a few more weary days and then, I’ll fly away
 To a land where joys shall never end, I’ll fly away

Refrain: I’ll fly away, oh glory, I’ll fly away;
 When I die, hallelujah by and by, I’ll fly away.”

One of the last times Sharon saw her Dad at Mayo she walked in and he was waving. “*Who are you waving at?*” she asked him. “*God. He’s winking at me.*” Rest well, dear Mark. We will see you again, following in your footsteps as best we can. Sharing the Rules as well as the Love. The Law. And the Gospel. Well done, good and faithful servant. Amen.

Marquis L. Ward
Readings for Funeral Service
April 9, 2021

Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.

Psalm 23 (printed in bulletin)

Romans 8:29, 31-35, 37-40

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 6:35-40

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 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."