

February 19, 2010
Funeral of Marcus Awana
The Rev. Kathy Crary

Fremont Memorial Chapel

There is, in any family or in a couple, the one who loses the keys, or the wallet, or sets down the cell phone, never thinking to see it again. Of course, with the cell phone, you can call the phone and hope it has enough of a charge to ring, so maybe you can find it. Or maybe not.

We have a member of the family with a moderate level of ADD. Attention Deficit Disorder means she sets things down and doesn't pick them up. Or maybe it means she will start one project one thing and move to the next thing without quite finishing the first project. As a result, stuff gets moved around and stacked on top or stuffed in jacket pockets or unloaded walking in the door.

Enter Kathy, the great finder of stuff. I am the family bloodhound of sorts. I worked for the State of California in a large bureaucratic organization that had a bazillion files. We had offices in LA and San Francisco, which means someone can lose something in two places. In 17 years there were only two files that disappeared that I could not find. It was what I did on top of doing my job, which had nothing to do with the file room.

I have one rule for finding things: Turn on all the lights. You can't find a pair of black socks in a darkened room. Light makes a big difference here and you're usually looking for stuff early in the morning or late at night. Marcus knew what darkness looked like.

In the course of his years, the circumstances of his life meant that the candles that led the way were being snuffed out, one at a time. It wasn't one thing that led to his death, it was a whole host of events that kept

blowing out the candles. His back surgeries blew out one and limited his abilities to do other things. The increasing and debilitating pain and the medications and the abuse of the medications blew out another candle. Challenges about relationships, his own depression, and probably some things we didn't know about, one by one, blew out the candles and gave him less and less visibility to find his way. Family and friends would come along and relight some of the candles, but at the end, he made his decision to extinguish the last candle, that flicker of life.

We can walk around the elephant in the room, but a death like this, sudden and painful and filled with the giant question WHY. But we will never fully understand WHY. And each and every person in this room has probably asked the question, "Could I have done anything differently?" Probably not. After all, we kept lighting the candles when some of these other hard-life events kept extinguishing them. But it is human to want to rescue the situation and wonder if we missed something along the way. But when it was getting darker for Marcus, he couldn't see us as clearly as he once could. And now we live with the hard reality that his decision might not have been our decision. But isn't that impossible to know?

At the high point of the darkness light shines. For those of us in faith communities, we know the stories of light and bright. Just a week ago we talked about the Transfiguration of Jesus before his three best friends on earth. He radiated light.

And the New Testament reminds us that no matter how great the darkness, it will not overcome the light. Jesus proclaims himself both Light of the World and Shepherd of the flock. These two images come together today as we take note of the darkness for Marcus, of his separation from the rest of us as sheep.

But Jesus has promised, and continues to make good on the promise, that darkness does not win and no sheep are lost. That's because Jesus is the light, the light that is turned on brightly to help us find what we're looking for, a way of hope and a journey to life.

We have lost greatly and we are celebrating a life lived as well as grieving a life lost. I have heard from various members of the family in the course of this week about what a tremendous sense of humor and a sly bit of wit resided in this man. At the expense of seeming a little casual or flip, I offer this thought. Finders keepers, losers weepers.

Marcus is not lost, he is found. We have lost and so we weep. Symbolically, he has died at the beginning of Lent, a most somber and penitential season of the church. But at the end of the somber 40 days is the feast of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I encourage you to close the loop on this cycle of dying and living by attending a service on Easter Sunday and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the faith we carry that Marcus is raised up out of darkness, pain and addiction and dances with everyone watching.

I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see.