

We gather here today to say goodbye to a woman that has touched countless lives. Duthiel was a wife, mother of 5, grandmother of 8 and a great- grandmother to 9. She cultivated a wide range of friends and colleagues as evidenced by the attendance this morning.

When I walked into Duthiel's hospital room, and she asked me to preach at her service, I was honored. As I started to process the grief of saying goodbye to my grandmother, I also started to plan today's service.

It is fitting that we are at Good Hope today, as this is a special place for our family. There are countless memories that I have here, and I know that Debbie, Dawn, Sandy, Gerald and Brenda do as well. It's here, to this church that your mother brought you growing up. Sunday after Sunday, to hear God's Word and to stress how important the Christian faith was in her life, and how important she wanted it to be in yours and your families lives.

So in many ways, it is very fitting that you have chosen to bring your mother here one last time as she brought you here to this very church so many times in your life, so that on this day especially, you may be fed with the promises in God's Word, promises that were important in her life.

It's very common when someone dies, for everyone to share their memories and talk about how good of a person the deceased has been. And the last few days have been absolutely no different either. I have heard many things like that about my grandmother and I could probably be up here for a whole week just sharing with you how wonderful of a grandmother she was.

Later today when we come back to gather together and share a meal, I hope you take time to share the memories that you have of Duthiel with all of us. I also hope that you take a moment to say a prayer of thanks to God for giving her to us to share in our lives, and to be what she was to each of you

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I've heard it said before "death is a natural part of life."

But think about that for a moment. If something is natural, the way it was intended to be, why does it hurt so much? I mean, for most of us, it doesn't hurt to breathe, to laugh, to touch, feel, smell, taste, and all the other natural functions of our lives. They don't hurt. Death hurts. I'm not talking merely about Duthiel here; I am talking about those of us who are here in the pews, hurting because she is no longer with us. I know seeing her in her last days was very hard on me too, it hurt to see Duthiel in such pain and unable to do the things she loved to do so much in life.

Death isn't what God intended for His creation. That's why it hurts so much. That's what living in a sinful world does to us; it separates us from God, from His intentions for us when He first created the world. And ever since mankind's fall into sin, we have had to deal with the pain of death. Even our Lord and Savior knows what its like to lose a loved one. Remember Jesus' reaction to the death of Lazarus? The shortest verse in the whole Bible, "Jesus wept". Death hurts. Death isn't natural. It separates us from our loved ones, and sin separates us from God.

But, just as death wasn't what God intended for us, and there wasn't anything we could do to avoid it, He chose to do something about it. God took on lowly human flesh, and in the person and the work of Jesus Christ, did something we could never do. Imagine, God, the same God who was there when the world was created, came down and was born in a stable! Jesus Christ lived the perfect, sinless life we could not, and died the most un-natural death of any human on the cross that Good Friday. He rose again on Easter Sunday from the grave, and with that resurrection, Jesus destroyed the power of the grave, allowing those of us who like Duthiel believed in Jesus Christ to be raised again to new life with God forever in heaven. Jesus invites us, especially in times like this when we are weak, when we hurt, to come to him.

"Come to me" those three simple words from Jesus in the text from Matthew if you look around throughout the day you will see depictions of Jesus; specifically look at the depiction of Jesus' hands. They're not closed, they're open, and they're reaching out to you. Those nail marks in those hands are for you. They were for Duthiel. We all know no one in this world is perfect, and Duthiel would have been the first to tell you she wasn't perfect either, even if I thought she was the perfect

grandmother. Duthiel came here to this place to hear what Jesus did for her on the cross. She was weak in her last months, and she was ready to go. She's now seen those nail marked hands and she has now gone to be with Jesus, where she has now been given rest from the things she struggled with in this life. That was a promise she believed, and a promise I hope you take with you from here as well. Yes, today is a sad day, and we cry, but we're here to come to Jesus, to find comfort and strength to cope with the days and weeks ahead and the rest of our lives. However we shouldn't really cry for Duthiel, because she's now free, free from suffering, free from having to depend on others for everything, free from pain, and she is now with God, never having to think about the things that gave her hardships and problems in this life.

Duthiel wouldn't want us to cry for her, she is now with God in heaven forever! She's no longer suffering from ailments that kept her homebound and dependent on other people. She's not hurting, she's not in pain, she's not lonely. She's with Christ. She is in a place that is so amazing and so wonderful, that even if she could come back here to this earth, and be healed of all her diseases and other ailments and be able to do things she liked to do, she wouldn't want to. She's with Christ, She's home, she's with those who have gone before her in a place that's perfect. She realized how blessed by God she was in her life.

God was good to Duthiel in this life, but that's nothing compared to where she is now. We all know she wasn't rich by the standards of the world, and you wouldn't ever see her on "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous". However, when I look out and see all of you here, her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, Friends, Colleagues all of you, how many lives she touched and how important she was in our lives and how important you all were to her, and most importantly, with her faith in Jesus Christ. she leaves this life richer and more blessed than most anyone I have ever known. As we say our good-bye's too Duthiel this day, we do so knowing that for those of us who believe in the promises God made to Duthiel and for us as well, our time apart will not be forever. We will see each other again, in the presence of God, with no more death, no more tears, no more sickness, pain, or any of the things that get us down in this life. We may weep for ourselves, but our pain is only temporary.

If there's one lasting image or memory of Duthiel I hope you take away from here today, it's this image.

Throughout the book of Proverbs, this image of what is today often referred to as the "Proverbs 31 Woman" or the wife of noble character is used as an analogy to describe wisdom. Yet it also describes how a woman of God hopes to be remembered. I have this part of my own Bible at home highlighted because this is the type of woman that I someday hope to marry, the type Duthiel told me I need to look for. This type of woman was Duthiel. As we share our memories of Duthiel, and especially, remember the example of faith that she displayed in her own life, it is proper to say these words about her from the book of Proverbs:

"Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates."

May this memory of Duthiel be the one that stays with you the longest, and continue to be an example in your own life and in your faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, so that we all may once again, see her in Heaven, free of the pain, sadness, and suffering of this world, and in the presence of God, in the place Jesus has gone to prepare for us who believe in Him.

May God grant this for Jesus' sake.

Amen.