

Funeral Service for A. W. Tozer

by Paris Reidhead

Dr. A.W. Tozer was a prominent Christian leader who emphasized the importance of knowing God and experiencing spiritual victory through surrender and faith.

Duration: 1:00:57

Scripture: Psalm 90:1-6, John 14:1-6, John 14:15, Colossians 1:20

Topics: "A.W. Tozer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the pursuit of worldly possessions and pleasures as a means to find satisfaction. He uses the example of King Solomon, who had wealth, power, and indulged in every desire, yet found it all to be empty and meaningless. The preacher emphasizes that the human heart cannot be satisfied by material things alone, but rather by a relationship with God. He concludes by urging the audience to remember their Creator and seek Him in their youth.

Transcript

As Dr. Bailey, the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, must be of the General Council, which is now in session at Phoenix, Arizona, he has appointed me to take his place and to also represent the Board of Managers at New York. The family has expressed, one, his simplicity, and second, the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. The scriptures will be read by Reverend H.P. Williams, pastor of the Northwest Alliance Church.

Dr. Harold Mason will lead us in prayer. Reverend Ray McAfee, who was identified with Dr. Tozer here for some 16 years, will read the obituary. Dr. William Norton, President of Trinity College, will speak in behalf of the ministers of the Chicago area.

And Mrs. Anderson will minister music and the meditation by Reverend Paris Reedhead, pastor of the New York Gospel Tabernacle and very close friend of Dr. Tozer's. One could not be around Dr. Tozer very long without realizing that he was an ardent lover of the old hymns of the Church. Two of his favorites we'll be using this afternoon.

Will you please turn with me to Hymn 595, Hymn 595. For our comfort and edification this afternoon, we will read Psalm 90. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, for ever thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction and returnst ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

Thou carryest them away as with a flood. They are as asleep in the morning. They are like grass which groweth up.

In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up. In the evening it is cut down and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger and by thy wrath are we troubled.

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath. We spend our years as a tale that is told.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by means of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Return, O Lord, how long, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O, satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil.

Let thy work appear unto thy servants and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us. Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.

May the Lord bring his own blessing and comfort and encouragement to our hearts through the reading of this Ninetieth Psalm. Our Heavenly Father, we bow before thee, who in infinite love and care is right here, thou art not far off, Lord. Help us to sense thy presence, thy blessed, holy reality.

Our Father, we are in the valley of the shadow of death, but we stand before thee, and we pray that thou mayst be with us at the gate of heaven. And the glory of it reaches us here. We thank thee for our beloved friend, how indebted we are to him, because he gave this life to thee, his life, that it might be given back to us in service, in blessing.

We thank thee Lord. We thank thee for these who must take the force of this blow most immediately. We bless our dear sister, Tosher.

Make thy face to shine upon her. Bless the dear children, each of them, their families. Oh Lord, how near thou art and how much we need thee in a time like this.

Help us to go out from this place rededicated, reconsecrated to thy holy purposes. The gate of death is not inviting, but by passing through it we call attention to the fact that it is better on before, and that the transient life that we now live, with its cares, its loneliness, its needs, its separations, is a path, a path which shines more and more brightly as we make our way. Oh, hear and help and bless and comfort and sustain in the work of the hands of thy servant, thy son, our brother.

Establish thou it and grant, dear Lord, that his life, his words, his great spoken utterances and his wonderful writings, we use these terms, dear Lord, as thou feel thou wouldst be pleased that we do. We

use them as reflections of our own weakness and inadequacy and limitations and in recognition of what thou canst do with a consecrated, competent life. Grant, dear Lord, that the wonderful message of this life, spoken and uttered, may be heard by all men and unspoken, may move us all upward, heavenward, with holy resolution.

How good thou art. How great thou art. How sufficient thou art.

And so, dear Lord, once more we pray, dear Lord, give it all over to thee and accept thy blessed will and providence through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Born April the 21st in 1897 at Lagos, Pennsylvania, Dr. A. W. Tozer began preaching at 20 years of age and was ordained at the age of 23 years.

After serving the large Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Chicago for 31 years, Dr. Tozer became the preaching minister of the Avenue Road Church of the Alliance, a leading evangelical church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Throughout his busy career, he has been much in demand throughout the United States and Canada as a speaker at Bible conferences and conventions of all denominations. Since 1950, he has edited the Alliance Witness, the official organ of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which has one of the highest circulations of any evangelical denominational magazine.

Well known as a religious writer, he is the author of *The Pursuit of God*, *The Divine Conquest*, *Wings Spread*, a biography of A. B. Simpson, *Let My People Go*, a biography of Robert B. Jaffray, *The Root of the Righteous*, *Born After Midnight*, and *Of God and Men*. His articles have appeared in almost every evangelical magazine, and his editorials are currently running in alternate issues of *The Life of Faith*, a leading British magazine published in London. A book on the attributes of God was published by Harper and Brothers in August 1961, under the title *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

Dr. Tozer received the LITTD degree from Wheaton College in 1950, and the LLD degree from Houghton College in 1965. Dr. Tozer was the Vice President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance from 1946 to 1950, and served on the Board of Managers of the Alliance from 1941 until the present. His Alliance pastorates, in addition to Chicago and Toronto, included Morgantown, West Virginia, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Toledo, Ohio.

After a brief illness which kept him from his pulpit on Sunday, May 12, 1963, Dr. Tozer died suddenly at 12.45 a.m., Monday, May 13, 1963. He is survived by his wife Ada, his sons Wendell and Forrest of Chicago, Illinois, Aidan and Roland of Miami, Florida, Dr. Lowell of El Cajon, California, and the Reverend Mr. Stanley of Lincoln Park, Michigan, and his daughter, Mrs. Rebecca Paul of Dansville, Illinois. A pastor to pastors, Dr. Tozer.

He has left us a minister to ministers, many of whom are here to pay their respects to him, in memory of him who challenged us with the message of union with Christ. I have been crucified with Christ, but I live, yet not I. Christ lives in me, so he challenged us and encouraged us, and we found strength through his message by pen and by pulpit. He showed us the reality of the living Lord, Jesus, the triumphant one.

And when I speak representing the clergy of the Chicago and Midwest area, I speak in recognition of Dr. Tozer's ministry through several coordinated efforts wherein ministers have been represented. I think of Mid-America Keswick, for he was on the organizing council and the organizing committee, trying to bring this message of the living Lord to seeking Christian hearts. And he was conscious that there were many Christians who longed to know Jesus in a better way, so he paused to help us along the way.

His was an effort to lead Christians through the word of God to see the greatness of God and to enjoy the greatness of their faith. He wanted men to know God. He sought to introduce sinners to their Savior, but he longed to help the saints to know the life of victory through surrender and faith.

Hundreds and thousands of Christians heard his lucid application of scripture to Christian living in his Mid-America Keswick messages. He was a speaker at six of the first eight conventions of Mid-America Keswick, a member of the organizing committee and one of the original council members. But he also served in a larger sphere, and the testimony to his influence on the national scene is found in his recent ministry at the National Association of Evangelicals, where we as ordained ministers and other delegated Christians had the opportunity of hearing him.

And once again, it was that same message of union with Jesus Christ which makes the difference between defeat and triumph in the Christian life. The message of the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection characterized A. W. Tozer's last public appearance before the delegates of the National Association of Evangelical Convention in Buffalo, New York on Thursday morning, April 25th. I can still see the delegates pouring in because they knew A. W. Tozer was going to give them something they could take home.

He spoke on the five-fold attachment to Jesus Christ, intellectually, volitionally, exclusively, inclusively, and irrevocably. In this message he defined a Christian as one back from the dead, a man joined to Christ in the hypostatic union, crucified but living in Christ's life. And I think this afternoon we still hear him say, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

He could not and would not, because of his very nature, omit young people from his ministry. And I recall in 1954 when he addressed thousands of students at the University of Illinois at the great InterVarsity Missionary Convention, speaking on the man God uses. He was respected and esteemed by college and university students.

Dr. Tozer ministered uniquely and effectively to these thousands. Stirred by his messages on the man God uses, hundreds of students were quickened in dedication to God's will and God's missionary program for the world. Students loved him.

Their minds were aroused and challenged and hearts were melted in devotion to his ministry. And I speak particularly, if I may at this time, to his ministry to us at Trinity College and Seminary when he spoke during our Christian Life Week a number of years ago. He synthesized the intellectual and the devotional.

And he brought a new respect to many evangelicals of the place of the mind in Christian living. But he also helped the intellectuals to see the place of piety as an expression of conviction of mind and heart. Dr. A.W. Tozer was an evangelical nonconformist desiring only to conform to Christ and to help all within his hearing to join him in this desire.

He was an evangelical mystic of the New Testament Pauline type, united with Christ, but oriented to world needs. He was an evangelical voice in the wilderness, the wilderness of dead orthodoxy, defunct liberalism, and defeated neo-orthodoxy, calling to saints to possess their possessions in Christ and to sinners to repent and be converted. A servant of Jesus Christ, an evangelical prophet, a man sent from God, whose he was and whom he served.

I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. Some time ago, when ministering in one of our Alliance churches, I couldn't help but observe that the young pastor walked, talked, gestured, and prayed as with Dr. Tozer. When I spoke to him about it, he said that others had made the same observation, and then added that although he had not deliberately tried to impersonate Dr. Tozer, yet the life of Dr. Tozer had undoubtedly left a great impression upon him.

Even so, I question greatly if there is an Alliance pastor, an Alliance church, that has not been influenced by the walk and by the witness and by the writings of this man of God who is going to be mourned today. I have known Dr. Tozer for a good many years. We have preached together.

We have traveled together. We have dined together. We have had fellowship together.

And I have observed down through the years that his walk and his talk were in perfect agreement, and his life never nullified that which his lips profess. As for his witness, he was fearless, uncompromising, and always so timely. His writings, we know, have blessed the world.

And although Dr. A. W. Tozer was an official worker of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, we could not say that he was exclusively ours. He belonged to the whole Church of Jesus Christ. And had you been at the funeral service in Toronto, Canada, on Wednesday, you would understand what I mean.

I have never been at a funeral service where I saw so many clergymen, not just Alliance ministers, but clergymen of all denominations. As I say, he did not belong to us exclusively. He belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Time certainly will never permit the reading of telegrams and cables which have come, nor even to tell you from where they come. There are so many. But to give you a faint idea as to the worldwide ministry of our dear friend, let me just mention a few.

Israel, the Director of the National Association of Evangelicals, Vietnam, Holland, Singapore, Chile, Arab lands, Argentina, Congo, Guinea Missionaries, Ecuador Mission, Conservative Baptist Foreign Missions, the Siam Mission. Then as you go through the pile, you see them from college presidents, pastors of other denominations, many, many churches, all revealing the fact that although I say an official worker of the Alliance, yet he did not belong to us exclusively, but to the whole Church of Jesus Christ. I have just returned from ministering three months in South Africa, and although wherever I went, not too many know about the Christian and Missionary Alliance as a denomination, but I was astounded at how many knew about the writings of Jesus of Dr. A. W. Tozer.

Just the other day in Durban, a minister said to me, there's one thing I always like to read, the editorials of your editor, Dr. A. W. Tozer. So on behalf of the President of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Dr. Nathan Bailey, whose place I am taking today, and in behalf of the Board of Managers, to which Dr. Tozer was a member for some 22 years, I would state that all of us feel that in the passing of this prophet of God, a spiritual giant has been removed from us. And although we all feel the loss deeply and keenly, and although we find our hearts crying out at times, who shall take his place? Yet we have found grace to say that the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his name forever.

O God, as thou wilt, O may thy will be mine. Into thy hand of love I would my all resign. Through sorrow or through joy, conduct me as thine own, and help me still to say thy name.

My Lord, thy will be done. My Jesus, as thou wilt, all shall be well. For me, each changing future scene, I gladly trust with thee.

Straight to my home above, I travel calmly on, and sing in life or death. My Lord, thy will be done. Our meditation this afternoon will be found in John chapter 14.

Our Lord Jesus Christ commences his ministry of consolation, of comfort, and of encouragement to his disciples at the close of this supper of remembrance, by speaking as each of us would hear him speak again today. Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, but how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. And from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth thus. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. And how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the work.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to Nicodemus, told us why he came into the world, declaring, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The word perish gives us the secret. I think perhaps a better translation would be wasted.

Wasted, squandered. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not be squandered. Man is the highest of God's creation.

The unique difference between man and all other creations is that in the heart man is an empty space, so enormous that only God himself can fill it. The beasts of the field are satisfied with the grass that they can eat, or the spoil that they can capture. But give to man everything that his body needs for sustenance, and his mind needs for beauty, and his hand needs for tools, and deprive him of God, and he lives his life in vanity and emptiness.

It was the writer of Ecclesiastes that God allowed to do that which perhaps at some time all of us would like to do, to see how much it takes of this world to satisfy the human heart. And so to David's son was given the opportunity of testing in measure and degree that none of us can ever experience, the fact that the world and all it contains is inadequate to meet the need of a human heart. Three areas were offered to him, these he exploited to the very full.

The first was power. His father, a valiant warrior, had captured enemies surrounding until it was just a few that remained. The soldiers of Solomon succeeded in driving these to their knees until finally he could,

from his throne, view the civilized world as he knew it, and say, all men everywhere pay taxes in tribute to me.

But then when he realized there were none that would dare to lift their fist or sword against him, he asked his heart if that which most men seek satisfied, namely power over their fellows. And the answer that came from the empty chamber of his heart was vanity of vanity. War is vanity.

So bubbles. It seemed so beautiful, but when secured, it offered nothing, nothing that would endure. Then, said he, he gave himself to wealth and all that it could procure, to money and all that it could buy, the things his eyes could see, his hands could handle.

And when gold was stacked in coffers as bricks against the wall, again he asked his heart, now that you have wealth and all that it can bring, are you satisfied? The answer that came was that that he'd heard before, vanity of vanity. War is vanity. Then said he, there remains pleasure.

I will give my appetites there all they desire. I will enjoy all that men have given their lives, their minds, their bodies for. He said there was nothing that my eyes saw that I kept back from me.

And when he was too jaded and exhausted to seek elsewhere for satisfaction, nothing could stimulate or arouse him again. He asked his heart, are you satisfied in this time with an eloquence that was beyond recognition? For there was nowhere else to turn. For all that's in the world is the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

The answer came back, vanity of vanity. So he said, what is the end of man? Is it just to eat, to drink, to live, to die? And there came again the memory of what he'd learned from his father and seen in the prophets. And he gave that word that ought to grip our hearts today.

Remember now thy creator in the days of our youth. What did he say? That Satan's grand delusion that the human heart can be satisfied with the things of this world is a lie. And those who pursue that lie inevitably find their lives have been wasted, been squandered.

For man was not lived simply to be the form upon which clothes were laid, the vessel into which food was given. Man had nobler purpose than to perpetuate his own existence. God from the beginning wanted someone like himself for God is love.

And so he gave to this creature that he made in his image and likeness, a mind with which to think, emotions with which to feel, volition with which to choose and will. And then he put that being in a body and he said, I'll meet with you there. And as I fill the universe in my personality, I will allow you to fill your body with yours.

And I will come and meet you there. And that which made humanity glorious was not the fact that man could design his own tools and procure his own food. That which made man glorious was the fact that he had been made for fellowship with God.

And so it was that man's love that ought to have gone to God and to have completed the circle with God's love poured upon man, man's love returned to him, turned in upon himself. And the turning of the love of the heart inwardly is what is known in the Bible as sin. For the essence of sin is but self-love and selfishness.

And so God in grace knew that if anyone lived thus in the circle broken and made the end of his being but things that he could handle and see, that which he could experience with his body, that power that he could exercise over his fellows, to whatever level he might attain, thus living, he was utterly wasted. And God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not be wasted. And the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing your need and mine, invaded earth with a body and personality like ours that the full weight of the temptation which had brought the race into ruin could fall upon him.

And we hear the word of heaven breaking the silence of this pilgrimage. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And so the sinless Son could now, by having identified himself with you and your humanity, reach down across the years to you and to me and draw us to himself, and then to go to the cross and die my death in yours, in my place and in yours, that we should not be wasted.

That that great mountain that separated from God, that sin of rebellion and treason, anarchy and enmity that had led us to transgress the pure and proper law and will of God, that his justice might be satisfied and the barrier removed and nothing should estrange us from him, and he could stand mercy-seated and bid us come, that we should not be wasted and squandered. And so today we find that there are those whom God has sent among us that heard the call, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and find for all your labor and your burden no rest or peace. Come to me and I will give you rest.

And when one has come and partaken of that rest, rest from the fear of death, rest from the weight of guilt, rest from the cancer of memory that we have received, rest from all the terrors of the life unknown and the future undiscovered. Rest in the finished work of Christ, and then to find that not only is the burden lifted, but the heart is satisfied. For our need is twofold, not only to deal with the past, but also to deal with that which was the need when we were made.

Saint Augustine knew it, and he said it more eloquently than perhaps it has ever been said since or could be again. O Lord, thou hast so made us that we cannot rest until we rest in thee. That life is a wasted life who does not savingly know Jesus Christ.

It was just two weeks ago on Sunday afternoon that Dr. Tozer stood in the vestry with his associate pastor in Toronto, Al McNally, and he opened his Bible to the notes that were there, fastened to the page where his text was found, Colossians chapter 1, verse 20. And looking with strangely serious eyes, he said, I'm speaking tonight and at council on Sunday, and I'm speaking to you on the theme Christ in us, the hope of glory. And then he said, Brother McNally, if it were possible that my family and my friends and the people of this church could come to know what this has come to mean to be, Christ in us, the hope of glory.

I would gladly give my life. He spoke as he had never spoken before, so said those who heard him. That very message will be by tape, transcription played at council this Lord's Day evening.

The only life that can possibly escape being wasted and squandered is the life where Jesus Christ has come to fill the aching, empty void. My friend, when God made you, he carved into you an empty place that only he can fill. You vainly seek to fill it with less or other.

Our brother Tozer has finished his work, but his work shall never be finished. He's slipped from the hands of family and friends and churches that he served and loved and those who claimed him for his own because of affinity of spirit. He belongs now to the ages.

Others that will test his writings in the years to come will be able to even better than we evaluate what he said and written. They'll know the man. He was never a merchandiser of words.

He lived for one thing and every page pulsates with this purpose, that men may not be wasted, that life may not be wasted, that days may not be wasted, but that we might know God vitally, personally, inwardly. You say you love the memory and ministry of A. W. Tozer. You say that he is known to you as friend, and so do I. But the test and proof of that friendship is not the protest or the profession we make today, but it is that degree to which we are prepared to allow Jesus Christ to come into the empty chamber of our hearts and fill it with himself, and that we in turn shall share with others as we shall meet them, giving to the Lord Jesus Christ all that he's purchased with his blood, all that he's ransomed by his grace, and that to be used by him in testimony of the life of Dr. Tozer is that Jesus Christ is enough.

You give to him a mind that's dedicated, a will that's abandoned, a body that's willing, and he is enough. His name is El Shaddai. I do not believe that God intends to raise for our generation another Dr. Tozer, but I do believe that God intends for you and me that have had the blessing and the privilege of his ministry to allow Jesus Christ to do in us everything that he taught us.

And when we present to the Lord Jesus Christ, first our bodies in union with him in death and then present to him our personalities for his service. In your home, your place of witness, in your ministry, you then will be able to say, yes, he was my friend, he was my teacher. Not because you can reminisce the days you spent together, but because having heard the word, you believed it.

Of himself, our Lord Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. And to those of us who mourn the passing of one whose memory shall enrich the days however long they may be, we might paraphrase those words and say, if you love him, obey his teachings. For he taught you never of himself nor sought to bring attention to himself, but always to Christ.

The message was Christ in you, the hope of glory. Our generation needs not another A.W. Poser. As much as he shall be missed, his eyes and ears to the Church, but our generation needs you with me, utterly abandoned to the Lord Jesus Christ, that he can do in us and for us and through us all that he desires.

May it be, therefore, we who hear the word, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and realize that any life less than filled with the fullness of Christ is to some measure a wasted life. Let it be, I say, that we in gratitude to God for all he's done and all the ministry he's brought to us, just ask the Lord Jesus to do in us and through us what he desires. Then the life and the ministry of the one who's labored among us will have that enduring memorial and I know he seeks the reality incarnate in your heart of the truth he preaches.

Although announcements are seldom made at funeral services, yet I'm very happy to make this one as it was given at the funeral service in Toronto, Canada on Wednesday. Dr. Tozer had a longstanding desire to see a student revolving loan fund established. In lieu of floral memorials, Mrs. Tozer has requested, following the expressed desire by some friends, the establishing of such a memorial fund to be made available for student assistance in Bible schools and colleges and at the graduate level.

Those desiring to contribute to such a memorial will be able to do so through the church and should so designate their wish. There are envelopes for their use at the back of the church. Another favorite hymn of Dr. Tozer's, number 134, But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow, and bad us immortal to

heaven ascend.

Lift then your voices in triumph on high, for Jesus hath risen and man shall not die. Hymn 134. And now, may the amazing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the unfailing love of God and the constant and abiding comfort of the Holy Spirit be with us all till Jesus comes.

Amen. Congregation will please be seated.

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