

Give Thanks

Today, our pastor at Northstar Church gave people in the congregation an opportunity to stand up and talk about what they were thankful for this Thanksgiving. I did not raise my hand to stand, not because I have nothing to be thankful for, but because I have too much to give thanks for in the two minute interval they were allowing us. From the surface it would appear that of all people, I would be the one not giving thanks this Thanksgiving. Since September 12, 2005, I have had more taken away from me than most people ever have to endure in a whole lifetime. My wife was taken from me on that day. She was taken from me by a convicted sex offender who was not even supposed to be out of prison. She was taken from me by a man that forced her to an ATM machine to make a withdraw against her will during business hours because this evil criminal knew that there are no safety devices on ATM's and that she would have no opportunity to call for help; therefore, this was the **safest way for him** to steal money from an innocent and precious victim. My wife lost her life just minutes later after being shot and after the demonized criminal turned her vehicle in front of an oncoming cement truck. The impact killed her instantly, but the demon fled until a Good Samaritan did what the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Cobb County Police Department, the Cherokee County Police Department, and the Acworth City Police could not do, put a stop to a rein of terror and a chain of flaws and mistakes and negligence that allowed this demon to be out and harming precious women, mothers, daughters, sisters, and children. One cannot measure the loss that now affects me, our three children, her mother and father, her sister and brother and brother-in-law, niece and nephews, and many other family members that held our precious Kimberly near and dear to our hearts. As I have said before, the ripple effect of this excruciating pain will be felt for years and years.

YET, in the face of all that we have to mourn and be angry about, this Thanksgiving my family has many reasons to give thanks. I am thankful for the nine years that I was able to spend with the most precious wife that a man was ever blessed by God to have. To have been loved as I was by such a wonderful woman, and to have had the opportunity to love a woman that personified grace, charm, and whole beauty, and a woman that was such a brightly lighted spirit, is truly a blessing. Ours was a love that could have been just as content in a tent as it was in a large house. True love has no boundaries and material wealth does not define love. Love is not defined by any earthly influences or elements, but is a gift from God that He has given us all the capacity to experience. We have this capacity to make of it what we will, and some choose to be open enough to recognize the righteousness of this gift and others do not. As for me, being able to meet and see God's light in my soul mate for all of eternity is a blessing. Our love is everlasting and the physical state of one or the other does not change the intensity or the existence of that love. As our marriage grew and the years passed, so did our passion and love for each other. This too, I am thankful for.

Besides all that I have to be thankful for as a husband, I have much to be thankful for as a father. My children truly are gifts from Heaven and they all three shine with an inner light that is of God. I am thankful that Kimberly was as good a mother as she was a wife. All of the qualities that made her such a wonderful person also made her the best

mother a child could ever pray for. She showered our children with love, compassion, understanding, caring, and wisdom. I am thankful that our children will always have her influence within them by her blood, and by her actions. It only took meeting Kimberly once to be forever positively affected by her enthusiasm for life and her love of people, so I am thankful that our children had years of this influence from which to build their own attitudes and character. Her spirit will always be with them both genetically and through their memories, and she will always encourage them and comfort them in their dreams. This too, I am thankful for.

I am also thankful that Kimberly is a Christian and that the light of Jesus Christ shined through her windows to her soul. Kimberly glowed with His love and even though we were not able to get to church as often as we would have liked, her personal relationship with God was awe inspiring and inspirational to me. She would always say that I inspired her and that my knowledge of Biblical history impressed her, but her faith in God and her daily reverence and prayers to Him is what gave me my strength and determination to maintain my own spirituality. For this I will be eternally thankful. Grief experts say that when someone experiences a tragic and traumatic loss, they will experience shock, denial, anger and hopefully, with time, acknowledgment and acceptance. Some people become so fixated in their anger stage that they want to blame someone to help with their pain. Unfortunately, this I have witnessed and this “someone” they want to blame most times is God. God did not take my beloved wife. Pure evil took my wife and now God wants to help bring about positive results from a horrific tragedy. To blame God is to run away and denounce Him. This only increases the distance between Kimberly and them. Kimberly is with God now and by not nurturing and growing closer to Him at this time of need only promotes hopelessness, despair, and distance. I and my family have to have the faith that God has a purpose in all that He does and that this purpose will ultimately bless us many times over. The doubters will say that God could have prevented the tragedy and that we would be more blessed to have had Kimberly here with us for many more years. It is true that I would have given my own life to have Kim’s spared so that my family could continue experiencing her influences and love in her physical state, and it is also true that our God is an all powerful God who could prevent anything He wanted. But, God is also an all loving God and we must have faith that He has a plan and that He needed Kimberly more in her spirit state to not only bless our family even more, but to also bless and save countless others who may not have otherwise been touched or saved if we had had her all to ourselves. It is this faith that keeps me sane during this time of tribulation. It is this faith that motivates me to cultivate my relationship with my Lord and Savior more and more everyday so that one day I will not only get to see my baby face-to-face again, but I will be able to see the face of Jesus Christ as well. I said earlier that mine and Kimberly’s love is everlasting and the physical state of one or the other does not change the intensity or existence of this love. I am thankful that God loves us the same way. He loves us unconditionally just as we are and it is because of His love for us that we are able to love each other. To continue to stubbornly blame God for Kimberly’s death, would be foolishly failing to acknowledge that it was God who blessed us with Kimberly and it was He who allowed us to experience her love and light for thirty years. She was His gift to us. And from every pore of my being, I am eternally thankful for that.