

10 May 2006  
Memorial Service for Harmon Martin

Greenspring Village  
Springfield, VA

## Jesu Juva

When Harmon moved into Greenspring a couple of years ago, I think he expected he was going to be able to enjoy the place a bit longer than he did.

*But, it turns out, God had other plans.*

And so the rich food and feast that Harmon now gets to enjoy is not in the dining room around the corner here, but the rich food and feast of Heaven described by the prophet Isaiah. And the Green-spring that Harmon now gets to enjoy are the *green* pastures and the quiet *springs* of water that His Good Shepherd has led him to, and laid him in. And while His time here was brief and often filled with tears and pain, his time now in Heaven is eternal and filled with joy and peace. For as His Shepherd led him here in this life, so He has led Harmon through the valley of the shadow of death and into the life of Paradise.

And that's why we're here tonight. To remember Harmon, *yes*; and his life, *yes*. But more importantly, to hear once again the words and promises of our Saviour **to us**, that this life is not all there is;

that those who die in the Lord we *will* see again;

and that although *our* plans may not work out as we expect, our Saviour's plans always do.

For His ways and His plans are perfect,  
even if we cannot understand them.

Even when His plans don't seem to be what we want.

Even when it *seems* as if our Good Shepherd isn't being very *good* at all.

Because Good is what our Saviour-Shepherd always is. He proved it on the cross, when He laid down His life for His sheep. When He took our sins upon Himself and then died our death so that we might live. He is no hired hand that cuts and runs when the going gets tough – but a Shepherd who sticks by His sheep. Who came into this world of sin not to promise us that we would avoid the troubles of this world, but to be with us through it all. *And He was with Harmon through it all.* From the moment he was baptized to when he breathed his last; from his home in Alexandria, to Telegraph Road, to here at Greenspring, to the hospital bed – His Shepherd never left him. Even when Parkinson's was robbing Harmon of his memory, His Saviour always remembered Him, and fed Him with His Word of life, with His body and blood, with His forgiveness. And so even while Harmon was dying on the outside, on the inside He was alive in His Saviour, and strong in Him. For Jesus would not let go of Harmon. Even stronger than

the grip of Parkinson's on Harmon was the grip of His Saviour . . . until Jesus finally set Harmon free from his burden and bondage in this world, and took him home to Heaven, to the feast and Green-springs that Harmon always wanted to enjoy.

And if we would remember Harmon rightly this night, then we must see in him this same truth that is for us.

The truth not of death but of life.

Not of defeat but of victory.

Not of despair but of hope.

The life, victory, and hope *that cannot be seen*, but comes only by grace through faith in Jesus, the crucified One. In your Saviour who laid down His life for you, rose from the dead for you, and lives for you. In the Good Shepherd who knows His own. Who knows you. Who knows everything about you, for all that you are and all that you have is from Him.

And so He knows what you need, and has promised to provide it.

He knows what threatens you, and has promised to protect you.

He knows what is best for you, and has promised to do what is best.

*Always.*

For your Saviour never starts you in His life, only to then leave you on your own! No, He who has begun a good work in you has promised to bring it to completion. From start to finish, loving, forgiving, and leading you, until finally He sets *you* free from the burden and bondage of this world, and like Harmon, takes *you* home.

Until He does, not all our plans may work out as we expect. There will be troubles, pains, heartaches. The valley of the shadow of death may seem very long and dark. It may seem that we say a whole lot more goodbyes than we say hellos. We want more time with our loved ones. But whenever a person is baptized and becomes a child of God, along with that wonderful gift comes the knowledge that at any time, their Father (and ours!) may call them home to live with Him. We get them for a while, but they never belong to us – they belong to Him. To Him who gave them life, and then redeemed that life with His death and resurrection.

We thank Him that He gave them to us for as long as He did;

that He enriched our life with theirs;

that He blessed us so abundantly

. . . even if we wish it were a bit longer.

And so while it is never easy to say goodbye, that does make it a bit easier. To know that this life is not all there is. To know that our loved ones who die in their Saviour Jesus Christ, we *will* see again, when on the last day our Saviour returns and our bodies will rise to life again, to live in Paradise. And that day will be a glorious day. It will not be in

the pain, the disease, the sorrow, or the trouble that we remember – but in the joy and peace and rest of Paradise. When there is finally one flock and one shepherd, and we – with Harmon – dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.