

Celebrating Lives Lived Wholeheartedly

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Today we are having two services in one room. We altered our schedule due to fall break for UGA and the community of UGA. The flexibility of our property gives us a chance to fluctuate some with the rooms we meet in and the number of services we have. This hour, normally, we would have people gathered in the Sanctuary for worship with a live music team and then when I get up to speak, the message is synced into that room on screen. Maybe you're here for the very first time, I'll let you know that that's not happening today though it happens on a regular basis. There's no 11:30 service today. Some of you may think you're here early for the 11:30 service, but this is the 10:15 and the time change has snuck up on you. You sing good when you've had a little extra rest. It's great to worship with you today on the property here at Watkinsville, and we are going to take a little bit of a pause from our study through the book of James.

Late last night and again this morning I felt compelled to go the direction that we're going to go in our time together today. The two services in one room gives me a sense that in many ways it's like we are kind of all together even though not exactly, and I want to have a little bit more of a family talk with you about where we are as a church regarding some things. Maybe you're here for the very first time, that does not mean that what's going to be said over the next few minutes is off limits to you. I believe that you will find this time encouraging. I want to meet you if you're a new attender or first time guest. I'd love for you to make your way in this direction, I'll hang around here at the front after the service. This morning I had opportunity to meet three families that were either new attenders or first time attenders, and I wish you would do that. There's a connect card that's a part of the Sunday paper, I would love for you to complete that. There are guest service desk outside this building and if you'd drop that guest card off there, we have a gift we want to put in your hand. There's some additional people that would like to say hello to you, and I sure would like to speak to you before you leave as well.

We have experienced something in the life of our church family over the last couple of weeks that we've not experienced in a long time. And that is that we have seen two long time faithful servants in our church family go to be with Jesus. Over the last two weeks, and as recent as yesterday, the funeral service as well, but we have honored the life, celebrated the life of two real spiritual giants in our church. The first is Cecil Martin. You'll see picture of Mr. Cecil to put a face with his name. Mr. Cecil passed away a couple of weeks ago at the age of 93, and then this week on Thursday, Ms. Kay Shepherd. Ms. Kay Shepherd was less than a month away from age 83. We experience death in our church along the way, but, honestly, it's not been a regular

event. There's not been a lot of that. And so this is new for us. And I know that we've learned in James that life is a mist, life is a vapor. This morning people drove to this property and saw the mist and the vapor rising off of warm ponds and you'll return home in a little bit and that mist and vapor will be gone. And just like that, it's a picture of how quick life comes and goes. I don't want us to run too fast past this moment. It's so easy in our busyness of life and the routine of life to miss some moments and miss some markers. I believe that this is a moment in the life of our church that we need to give some pause too.

Today we're going to celebrate the lives of two whole hearted followers of Jesus Christ. Now that's significant to us because we say it, we put in print, we give toward it, we plan for it, we equip for it, that we believe our mission is to make wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ. It's more than a bumper sticker. It's more than a plaque. It's more than a statement on a page. And I believe that when we witness that in front of us, that we should pause long enough and stop long enough to say, "There it is. That's what a wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ looks like." Now, Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay were not perfect people. We are not celebrating perfect people. We are honoring the lives of two wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ. Psalm 115 verse 16 says that, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." I like how the New Living Translation puts it. It says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants." And today, though we grieve over our loss and we miss the presence of two long time faithful servants here, please remember that what we are experiencing, the death of these saints, is precious in the sight of the Lord. Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay, by honoring their life, we are exalting Christ. Imagine that testimony. Imagine honoring your life and in honoring that life, it means exalting Christ.

When I think about Mr. Cecil, age 93, Ms. Kay, less than a month from being 83. They had been part of Watkinsville First Baptist church for decades upon decades. Ms. Kay came to be a part of this church family in her early twenties. She's been a member of this church since 1960, Mr. Cecil Martin was also around that same time. From a pastor's perspective, they were wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ. Mr. Cecil was an engineer, working in soil and water conservation. Ms. Kay was a business woman. She was an educator. She was the first guidance counselor hired by the Oconee County school system. They both had degrees, Kay from Florida State and Georgia. Mr. Cecil from Georgia. Cecil was a husband, a dad, a grandfather; Ms. Kay, a wife, a mom, a grandmother. They love Jesus and they served Jesus. Over the last few years, I have spoken to you about following Christ from God's word, and I've spoken to you about ownership in a local church. And we've called some of those series and messages like Church Matters, and Engage, and Boarding Now recently. From a pastor's perspective, I was able to look at Mr. Cecil's life and Ms. Kay's life and know that church mattered to them, that they were engaged in the local fellowship, and that they were on board with the mission of Jesus Christ. They were givers, they were goers, they were senders, they were pray-ers. There was ownership in this local fellowship, and listen to this, they were passionate about reaching the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And they were passionate about reaching the next

generation with the good news of Jesus Christ. If I heard it once, I heard it a dozen times, Ms. Kay saying to me, "Pastor Carlos, we've got to do more for our teenagers." "We've got to do more for our teenagers." "We've got to do more for our kids." "We've got to do more for these kids." We've got to do more.

And today I want us to pause long enough to stop and think about the witness that has been lived in front of us. Celebrate the faithfulness of God by what we have seen in the faithfulness of his servants. Let's take our Bibles and open them to Psalm 67. Psalm 67, it's a Psalm that we looked at this summer and it's a Psalm I want to come back to because I feel like it relates so well to the heart and life and prayers of both of these individuals. Psalm 67 is a prayer. It is a prayer song. It is a prayer that captures the heart of God, the will of God, the plans of God, the mission of God. It is a Psalm that is supported by the message of the New Testament. Psalm 67 speaks of God's plan and mission for all nations to be glad in him, and for all the ends of the earth to come to fear him. You hear that restated by the words of Jesus in Matthew 28 when he commissioned the disciples by saying, "Go ye therefore into all nations and baptize them in the name of the father and son, the Holy spirit and teach them everything that I've commanded you." And then again in Acts 1:8 where he said, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." Old Testament and New Testament. The passion of God, the will of God, the plan of God, the mission of God was to see people come to saving knowledge of him. To be restored to him, reconciled to him, bring him glory through praise and exaltation. So today as we look at this Psalm, I want to walk through it and connect it to the lives that have been lived in front of us and honor some saints that have lived it out for a number of years.

First of all, Psalm 67 is a prayer warrior prayer. Verse one,

"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us." There is passion in those statements. There's energy in those statements. There's fight in those statements. Verse three, verse four, verse five repeats over and over, "Let the people praise you. Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad. Let the peoples praise you. Let all the peoples praise you. It is a prayer warrior prayer. You might ask what is a prayer warrior? We pitch that word around. We use it as a commendation of someone. We've said about Mr. Cecil that he was a pray-er. We said repeatedly about Ms. Kay that she was a prayer warrior. And what does that mean? It means that the testimony's there of being someone who prays, and prays without ceasing. And prays believing. Prays when they feel like it, prays when they don't feel like it. Who takes matters to God and pleads with him and asks, comes back to him and asks and prays and continues. It's the person that comes to you and says, "Hey, how can I pray for you?" And they either pray with you in that moment or they walk away and it is what they do. They pray about it. I asked our pastors on staff, I said, "Y'all send me some notes, send me some thoughts, send me some texts about Ms. Kay and your experience with her." And more than one of them

came back and said, "Kay prayed for me, prayed for our ministries, prayed for our kids, prayed for our families, and she would come back and ask us how those prayers were being answered."

Prayer warriors show up when it's time to pray. When Kay's health was strong, I think about this conversation, me standing in front of a church and saying, "Hey, we're coming up on an all church prayer night and let's all be here at 5:30." I try to imagine Kay sitting in her house, when her health was strong, thinking, "There's the all church prayer tonight, I wonder if I'm going to go." Those who knew her knew that ship sailed a long time ago. When she signed up for Jesus, when she committed life to Christ, when she started walking with him, she committed to this church. It's what we do. It's who we are. She was a prayer warrior.

One of the great testimonies of Ms. Kay's life was her devotion to the Tuesday morning prayer gathering of women from our church. For more than two decades, a group of women with additions along the way would meet here on this property at 10:00 AM and pray, and they still do that. Pray for our church, pray for God's work, lives, people, needs of people. Week after week after week after week. When Kay's health began to fail, that group of ladies began to meet at her home and would meet there and pray with her so she could be a part of it because she wasn't physically able to get here to the property. It's for all women. It's for you. It would be 10:00 AM on Tuesday morning, and she was devoted to that. I think about one day when all of this is all said and done, maybe God will give us an opportunity to look into history at what he was doing and we will be able to see that the fruit of what happened on this property for Watkinsville First Baptist, and the glory of Jesus would have a strong, strong line tied back to the prayers of those women week after week after week after week on Tuesday morning.

This Psalm is asking God for more prayer. It says in verse one, "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us. That your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." This was the Psalmist saying, "God, would you do more? Would you bless us?" Kay was that kind of pray-er. She asked God to do more. She wanted to see God do more. Listen, it was not, "God, do more so I can have more." Her heart, and I saw it in Mr. Cecil's heart, it was, "God, do more so that you can do more through us so that more people can come to know you." That's what this Psalm is about, "God be gracious to us and bless us," not just for our own good, not for our own pleasure, but it's, "that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations." Kay wanted to do more. She wanted to do more giving. She wanted us as a church to do more giving. She wanted us as a church to do more praying, to do more going, to do more sending, to do more supporting, to do more helping, to do more. And she would say it. She would show up in my office and she would say, "Pastor." She wasn't mad. Not hostile. Not angry, but burdened. "Pastor, we've got to do more. We got to do more." And today as a church, we give more, we pray more, we go more and we send more than we ever have before, and if there's any one person that gets the positive blame for that, I would attribute it to Ms. Kay. To God be the glory.

This Psalm is an all people's prayer. And all people's prayer. Verse three says, "Let the peoples praise you, oh God, let all the peoples praise you." When you get around Mr. Cecil and you get around Ms. Kay, you found that they were no respecter of persons. They saw every soul as an individual. They saw them with care, they saw them with concern, and a great visual testimony to that was both of their commitments to a ministry called International Friends. For a number of years, I'm told that Mr. Cecil would drive the van to pick up international families for International Friends. Are you aware of this? Do you know that on Thursday mornings, fall semester, winter, spring semester, that at Beech Haven Baptist Church a ministry meets there called 'International Friends'. Internationals that have moved here, usually tied to the University, are invited and are often brought by vans to Beech Haven Baptist Church and people go there and take care of kids and teach English as a second language, and find opportunity after opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ for those internationals.

Cecil driving the van, Ms. Kay, for years teaching English as a second language to internationals. There's a contingent of people from our church every Thursday that go there and are meeting on Thursday morning with internationals. And scattered around the globe are people today that know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior because some people saw the gospel of Jesus Christ for all peoples and put shoe leather to it and went and taught English as a second language and people come to know Christ through it.

This Psalm is in all nations knowing God prayer, not just an all peoples, but all nations. Verse four says, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy." Matthew 28, "Go ye therefore into all nations." Revelation, you open it up, you see every tongue and tribe gathered around the throne in worship of Almighty God. In Kay's life, she was an all nations person. God gave me the privilege to travel with Ms. Kay to Romania a couple of times on mission trip. I remember early two thousands and Kay, in her sixties at that time, said, "I want to go to Romania. Prince Avenue's going to Romania. Go with me to Romania." I'm like, "Romania, where's Romania?" Ms. Kay wanted me to go. I said, "Carla, I'm going to Romania. Ms. Kay wants me to go, and the Lord wants me to go." So we went to Romania, and I watched her come alive there. In those villages, Jibo, and seeing people baptized and kids hearing about Jesus, and preaching, and her teaching through a translator. I remember returning from one of those trips and Kay said to me, "Pastor Carlos, I've never felt more alive than when I was in Romania." Kay carried with her a sense that God had called her to international missions when she was a little girl. She'd share with me that just through a series of life events for some reason, that never materialized into her living on an international mission field.

Well, with all my heart, I believe that God placed in her that burden, that call, so that she could be for us a person to beat the drum for the world to know Jesus, and because of that, multiplied numbers of people now are have been sent out from this place because of a heart for the world to know Christ. When on Wednesday of this past week, Randy Cain and I sat with Ms. Kay, it wound up being just a few hours before she would go to be with Jesus. We sat

beside her and we talked and we listened to her talk, she was struggling to breathe already because of the complications of lung cancer. At some point in the conversation, Kay looked at me and she said, "Well Carlos, tell me about the church. Tell me about the church. How's the church?" And I looked at her and I said, "Ms. Kay, it's Wednesday, today our team is returning from Nepal. Dave and Taylor and Robbie are on their way back from Nepal and they were able to find people who trusted Christ when they were there before and more have been saved and some have been baptized, and God's doing miraculous work in reaching the Bing people in Nepal. Imagine her heart and her reaction as she heard that news and I was able to share with her in these hours before she would go to be with Jesus, that an unreached, unengaged people group had heard about Jesus through the witness of Watkinsville First Baptist, and new names are written down in Heaven because of that witness.

She celebrated that. This Psalm 67 also is a celebration of faithfulness prayer. It is a celebration of faithfulness prayer. Verse six says, "The earth has yielded its increase. God, our God, shall bless us." That is a prayer of celebrating faithfulness. Where? "The earth has yielded its increase." It's a picture of harvest. Every farmer knows that for a harvest to come in, you have days where patience is demanded through the storms, through the disease, the pest, the time that it takes. When you get to a point of yielding increase, you see a picture of faithfulness. And this Psalm celebrates the faithfulness of God. These verses say God shall bless us. God shall bless. Our God is faithful. Kay's favorite hymn was Great is Thy Faithfulness. She had claimed that as her favorite hymn because she had seen God be so faithful. Even as I speak about Mr. Cecil, their testimony to me, for Cecil, was from when he was 73 and on. Think about that. What I'm declaring to you, celebrating before you, is what I saw in his life from age 73 and on. What I saw in Ms. Kay's life personally, was from age 62 on. At a time where many would say it's time to check out and let someone else check in, they were faithful to God because they had seen him faithful to them.

Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay had a story with our church. They had been a part of a lot of changes. You see those changes marked by where we meet for worship. Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay both were worshiping at Watkinsville First Baptist Church when the church was not meeting on this property. When the church met downtown just off of main street, there's a white building, it looks like a church building and somebody lives in it now, but that's where they worshipped. There came a day where the church relocated to this property and built the building we refer to now as the youth room. That youth room piece, block building there, was the original building on this property. And that's where they came to worship. Then they built the sanctuary and moved from there over to worship in the sanctuary and then we built this building. Some of you think it's just always been like this. Think about this, think about what Ms. Kay and Mr. Cecil have experienced worshiping downtown in a building. Come to a block building right here to my left to worship. Then coming into a new beautiful sanctuary and worshiping. Then building the Life Building. We had multiple services in the sanctuary, then we had services in sanctuary and services in here. Then we had just services in here. Then we had services in the

morning and services at night, and then we were back to multiple services with one synched into that room.

Just about a year ago, Ms. Kay was seated in a chair because of her health, right beside the platform when we broke ground right out here for this new worship center and kids space that we're building. Imagine the faithfulness. In a few weeks, we'll stop worshipping in this building as a group and we'll move into a new worship center and we're going to be a confused people. Where do we sit? Can I tell you that there are 12 women's toilets in there. Amen? Can I get a witness? Amen. So let's go today. Let's go today. Think about what Mr. Cecil, Mrs. Jean walked through all those years, just different places. Some people ask me now, "In the new building, is it going to be like the Sanctuary or is it going to be like the Life Building?" And here's my answer. It's not going to be like the Sanctuary. It's not going to be like the Life Building. It's going to be like the new Worship Center. We've never been there before. It's going to be the same people. It's going to be the same music, and praise God is going to be the same word. It's going to be the same message. It'll be different, but God is faithful. People like Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay have shown us that God is faithful.

This Psalm is a salvation prayer. It says, "God shall bless us. Let all the ends of the earth fear him." That's synonymous with salvation. It's not a fear like we fear sickness, or we fear the doctor, or we fear speaking in public. It's a fear of reverence. It's a fear of awe. It's a fear of trust. It's a fear of acknowledgement that he is God. Jesus is king. He's Lord of our life. And the prayer he has here is that all the ends of the earth would know him, would fear him, would reverence him. Perhaps today as a teenager, young child, or a senior adult, you need to turn from what you've been trusting in and turn to Christ and trust him.

Turn your life over to Christ and let the prayers of Psalm 67 come true. Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay, they get all the great words. They get all the great words. Character, brave, courageous, faithful, generous, encourager, prayers. They get the great words. But Mr. Cecil and Ms. Kay, they didn't wake up at 22 great. At 34, they didn't get all the great words. They get the great words today at 83 and 93 because of multiplied times of saying "yes" in obedience to God. Year after year after year after year, "Lord, here's my 'yes.'"

Eugene Peterson calls it, "A long obedience in the same direction." For decades before us as a church family, they lived a long obedience in the same direction. I am not discouraged today. I'm not disheartened. I was not ready to let Ms. Kay go. I was not ready to let Mr. Cecil go. They were ready. Praise the Lord. They were ready. I'm not discouraged. And here's why. Because all over this room, multiple services today, they're young Kay's and young Cecil's that I believe in the years ahead will say 'yes' to the Lord. I want to tell you, one day, Lord willing, if I don't go first and Jesus doesn't come back, I'll stand beside you. I'll stand with your family, and I want to speak great words. I want to speak great words. And that'll happen as you say yes to Jesus again and again and again. Some of you today need to say yes and go to the nations. God is calling

some of you to be pastors. God is calling some of you to be prayer warriors. So you've drifted and God is calling you back today to be committed to his bride, the local church. God's calling you to put your yes on the table. For some of you, God's calling you to be saved. What do you need to say yes to today?