

Damon Linneman Funeral – June 26, 2026 – Job 19:23-27, 1 Corinthians 15:50-38, John 10:7-15

Death has a way of making us ask difficult questions. Sometimes those questions are practical. What is the funeral going to look like? What's the password to the checking account? How is day to day life going to go on without him?

Sometimes those questions are much deeper, though. Why did this happen? Why now? Why this way? Why was a man surrounded by family, friends, children, grandchildren, plans, and possibilities taken so suddenly? Those are the kinds of questions that arise when we gather for a funeral like this one. And they are very natural questions to ask as we remember Damon.

Many people knew Damon as someone who asked questions. Not shallow questions, but deep questions. Questions about life. Questions about the universe. Questions about God.

He was a man of remarkable intelligence. He spent his career helping ensure that things worked properly and safely in one of the most complex environments you'll ever find. He was a problem solver. A mentor. Someone people trusted when they needed advice. His children especially knew him as someone they could turn to for guidance and wisdom.

But even the brightest minds eventually come face to face with a question that can't be solved by human intelligence, human experience, or any amount of hard work. That question is death. No amount of wisdom can stop it. No amount of knowledge can explain it away. No amount of planning can prevent it. Death is not a puzzle to be solved. It's an enemy.

And that's exactly how the Scriptures describes it. In our Epistle lesson Paul speaks plainly about death. He doesn't pretend it's natural. He doesn't tell us to celebrate it. He doesn't try to make us feel good about it. Instead, he calls it what it is: an enemy. *"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

Death is the great interrupter. It interrupts marriages, friendships, plans, and dreams. It interrupts conversations that we thought we would have tomorrow. Fathers who expected to spend more years with their children. Grandfathers who expected to watch grandchildren grow. It interrupts lives that seemed far from finished.

And that's why funerals hurt. Because Damon was loved so deeply. And his life was filled with meaning. The more precious the gift, the greater the loss when it's taken away.

And so today we mourn. Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Christians don't pretend that death isn't tragic and painful. We know exactly how cruel it is.

Yet in the midst of that grief, the Lord gives us something remarkable. He gives us a promise. In our Gospel reading Jesus says, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."*

He's not a teacher who explains every mystery. He's not a philosopher who answers every question. He doesn't help us understand why every moment of suffering happens.

Instead, He says, *"I am the Good Shepherd."* And the sheep aren't saved because they understand everything. The sheep are saved because the Shepherd knows them. The Shepherd calls them by name. The Shepherd claims them as His own.

That's what we cling to today. Because there are questions about Damon's death that we can't answer. Questions that even the wisest theologian can't answer and trust me, I'm not that.

But our hope has never depended on having every answer. Our hope depends on having a Savior. The Good Shepherd saw His sheep threatened by sin, death, and the grave. And rather than abandon them, He laid down His life for them.

Jesus went to the cross carrying the sins of the world. He entered the valley of the shadow of death willingly. He allowed death to do its worst to Him. And then on the third day He rose again.

*"Death is swallowed up in victory."* The enemy was defeated. The grave looks so powerful. But Christ is so much stronger. At every funeral, death looks like it has won. But Christ has already declared victory.

And because Christ lives, those who belong to Him will live also. That's the confidence we hear in Job's famous confession: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God."*

Job spoke those words while suffering. While grieving. While surrounded by loss and a lot of unanswered questions. And he doesn't know the answer to those questions. And many of them, he never would. That's kind of the final message of the book. But he does know one thing: *"I know that my Redeemer lives."* And that's enough.

The same Lord who redeemed Job is the Lord who redeemed Damon. The same Lord who conquered death for Job conquered death for Damon. The same Lord who promises resurrection to Job promises resurrection to Damon.

And so today we confess not merely that Damon's soul is with Christ, which is certainly true and wonderfully comforting. But we confess even more. We confess the resurrection of the body.

We confess that a day is coming when Christ will call the dead from their graves. A day when this mortal body will put on immortality. A day when what is sown in weakness will be raised in power. We confess that the grave doesn't get the final word. Jesus does.

But there's one more thing Paul says in our Epistle reading that I think is worth repeating. After proclaiming Christ's victory over death, after announcing the resurrection, after shouting that death has lost its sting, Paul concludes with these words: *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."*

It's easy to overlook that verse, after the powerful statement made in the verses before it. But I think we need to hear it today. Because one of the lies that death tells us is that everything has been wasted. That a life cut short was pointless. That plans left unfinished were meaningless. That ultimately, nothing was accomplished because it all ended too soon.

Our world tells us that so often. The world tells us that the value of our lives is found in the quantity of our accomplishments. The longer the life, the more meaning it had. And a life cut short is tragic because of what you weren't able to do.

But St Paul says otherwise. Paul tells us that because Jesus lives, nothing we do is in vain. Not a husband's love for his wife. Not a father's care for his children. Not a grandfather's delight in his grandchildren. Not a friend's encouragement or a mentor's wisdom.

None of it is in vain. All of it has meaning. Because though death may be an annoying interruption to those things. It can't erase them. The resurrection guarantees that.

Everything Damon did had eternal meaning because because our Lord gave him eternal life with an eternal future. A future spent being Damon Ross Linneman, the man you all knew and loved, for all eternity. Damon is still Damon, right now in heaven. Damon will be Damon again, in a new and sinless and glorified body on the last day. Nothing about Damon's life was in vain.

Because Damon belonged to Christ. And because he belonged to Christ, death doesn't get to define the meaning of his life. Christ does.

Today we grieve because Damon was deeply loved. But we do not grieve as those who have no hope. We grieve as those who know that our Redeemer lives. And because he lives, Damon will stand upon the earth again. You and I will stand upon the earth again. All God's baptized children will stand upon the earth again.

And Damon will know the joy of an eternity getting every question of the universe answered by the God who made him, the God who saved him, and the God who made him new once again. Amen.