

Today's Devotional is provided by Jim Garner



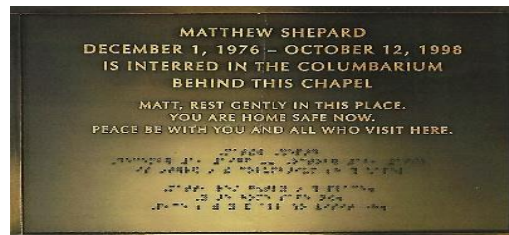
Remembering Matt

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Luke 12:48b (NIV)

Living in Washington DC has afforded me opportunities to witness and be a part of many awesome events. I have celebrated in front of the White House the reelection of our first African-American president; walked in many Pride Parades; marched with the kids at the March for Our Lives rally against gun violence; enjoyed composer Philip Glass perform a piano concert at the National Gallery of Art; and attended a World Series Game. I am thankful to have experienced these gifts.

But by far, and without any doubt, the most meaningful and moving events I have attended were the interment service for Matthew Shepard and the dedication of the plaque honoring Matt's place of interment, both occurring at the Washington National Cathedral.

On October 26, 2018, I joined Rev. Dwayne in attending the Interment/Memorial Service along with 4000 others. It was a very holy moment. I felt the presence of God in that place. Later, on December 2, 2019, my spouse Scott and I attended the service dedicating the plaque marking Matt's interment in the cathedral's



columbarium. Again, it was a very special and holy occasion.

At both services Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, gave the sermon/homily. At the latter service, Bishop Robinson remarked on the amazing progress made in the 21 years since Matt's violent death. We have seen God's marvelous work bringing about a greater sense of community, equality, and inclusion – culminating with the recognition of marriage rights for same gender couples.

Yet, as the Bishop rightly noted, there are still Matthews out there today who live in places in this country and around the world where it is not all that different from 20 years ago. We continue to see marginalized people disrespected, including people escaping oppression and seeking refuge and opportunities who are belittled and labeled as illegal. Bishop Robinson challenged those of us in the cathedral's nave, those of us living safe and comfortably in the "great LGBTQ bubble" that is DC, to honor Matt and carry forward his legacy by acting -- by doing good. He said: "We who have been pulled into the lifeboat cannot then not care about those who are still drowning." Yes, God can still do marvelous things and work wonders. But often God needs each of us – God's disciplines -- to take action to help accomplish these wonders and miracles.

Prayer: First of all, thank you God! Thank you for all the blessings you have provided in my life – the years of life I have enjoyed, the love and support of family and friends, and the peace that comes being safe from harm. Next, use me. I want to help you work miracles. Help me see those outside the lifeboat who need rescued. Give me the courage and wisdom to do good and to help others into the lifeboat. Amen.

Here is a link to the video of the Internment Service on October 26, 2018. <https://youtu.be/FSXtHMXuaPI> And here is the link to the Plaque Dedication Service on December 2, 2019. I strongly encourage you to watch the first hour – through Bishop Robinson's message. <https://youtu.be/bKRda0b36OA>