

Preaching at funerals can be hard, especially in the face of the death of a beloved one who struggled with addiction. It can be hard to speak the truth, but telling the truth about God and the person who has died is very important, even in the face of the raw emotions, guilt and pain that can accompany a drug-related death.

Following are excerpts of a sermon from such a recent funeral. (Note: The name of the deceased has been changed.)

It's important to tell the truth in the face of death – the truth about God, and the truth about "Joe." So here's something true. Joe was a child of God. That's true, more than anything else anyone say about him. He was a child of God, not because of anything he did or said, or didn't do or didn't say. Joe was a child of God because that's what God said in the water and the word of Holy Baptism. God named and claimed Joe as God's own, and promised to love him with a love that would never let him go! That's true!

Also true, Joe struggled to be the person he saw himself as – the big man with the power to make others happy through his personal charm and generosity. He never quite figured out how to get to that place without resorting to the use of the drugs that would eventually bring his earthly journey to an abrupt and tragic end.

So, here's another truth. None of us are perfect. None of us are without sin. We all are a mixed bag of goodness and selfishness. And we all stand before God in need of forgiveness.

And then, here's the truth about God – the truth that is at the heart of the Easter promise. God in Christ proved through the cross and resurrection that God's love is stronger than death, and that there's nothing in all creation that can separate us from God's love – nothing there is, nothing we say, nothing we do. God's love is steadfast and knows no bounds.

Amen.

Grace and Peace,
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