

Our Spiritual Estate

Barb Sullen's Celebration of Life

One of my favorite quotes goes like this:

"Everything a person does for themselves they take with them, but everything a person does for somebody else they leave behind."

What we leave behind is our estate. What is an estate? When we think of money, we often think of money, property, charitable trusts, and personal items. But there is something more important than tangibles regarding our estate; I would call it "Our Spiritual Estate." It's the gift that keeps giving because it replicates itself for generations, and older generations often don't realize how they inherited it; they just know that they have it.

It reminds me of the story about the Thanksgiving ham. Many of you cook turkeys on Thanksgiving, some of you ham, and if you're lucky, you have both.

(Tell the Ham Story)

Barb left many tangibles to remember her by and for her family to hold dear to their hearts forever, but she left something much more valuable for all of us to remember her by, which is her spiritual estate. You benefit from her spiritual estate if you are connected to Barb Sullens. Amen.

Let me ask you a question: as a beneficiary of Barb Sullen's Spiritual Estate, what lessons and blessings did she leave to you?

One of those lessons and blessings we find posted in your program, on the inside right at the bottom, the lesson and blessing reads like this:

"Though God has already called me home, remember you are not alone. So please don't linger in the dark; keep the light in your heart. Don't lose hope, and don't be sad. Be thankful for your life, and remember God has left the light on for when you come home."

In that one quote, she comforts us to know we are not alone. She encourages us to live in the light and not the dark. To keep the light on in our hearts, not for ourselves but for others. Barb was a hope dealer, and she insisted we don't lose

hope or become sad. She reminds us to count our blessings and be grateful for the lives we have.

The Scriptures Donna read for us this morning were only a few of the countless favorite scriptures of Barbs.

Isaiah 40:26-31 reminds us that *“the LORD is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He doesn’t grow tired or weary; His understanding is beyond human reach.”* What a promise, a promise that Barb held onto fervently.

In Deuteronomy 31:1-8, Barb points us to another great promise from God. *“But the LORD is the one who is marching before you! He is the one who will be with you! God won’t let you down. He won’t abandon you. So don’t be afraid or scared!”*

Barb came to see me after she received the challenging news from her oncologist that she had limited time left due to the aggressive nature of her cancer. And let me pause for a second and say what we all know and feel “Cancer Sucks.”

When she came in to share her devastating news with me, we sat together for over an hour, laughing, crying, and resinating on God’s Word and discerning what she should be doing, going, saying, etc., in the time she had left.

I encouraged her to resolve any conflict that existed in her life. I encouraged her to say “I love you” often to everyone who need to hear it. But most importantly, I told her she had the opportunity to show us all how to finish this earthly life well, in a Jesus-centered way, and boy, did she do that, Amen! She went full steam ahead with the time she had left, praising God, worshipping God, sharing the best news ever about God, and loving everyone in her path Jesus-centered way. What an example and inspiration to us all.

If you sit here this morning and you identify as an atheist, agnostic, irreligious, or spiritual stray, let me welcome you, and I am glad you are here. Regardless of where you are in the stream of life, you benefit from Barb’s spiritual estate. She wants you to leave here today knowing that God is real, wants nothing more than to be in relationship with you, and, most importantly, loves you, regardless of your past or current status.

If you are separated from God this morning, regardless of your circumstances or beliefs, you are invited not to leave here the same way you came. In a minute, we will listen to a closing song called “It is Well.” During this song, you are invited to

pray in the privacy of your own heart, honestly seeking God, and asking to be in relationship with God. The reason that's possible is because of Jesus and God's love for you. It takes two to say yes to a relationship, and God said "YES" to you before you were born.

If you want to live the best life ever on earth, as in Heaven, then you must live a Jesus-centered life. Barb would wish nothing greater for your life than to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior and spend the rest of your earthly life growing your Own Spiritual Estate, so you have something of depth and weight you can leave behind, which is the gift that keeps on giving.

In closing, the lyrics from "Letter From Heaven" were about the life and estate of Barb Sullens:

Today I got a letter from Heaven
Cleanin' out my Mamaw's house
I just smiled while I read it
I swear I heard her voice out loud
She said I love you, God is real
And now I get it
Today I got a letter from Heaven

Friends, Barb's Spiritual Estate is a Letter from Heaven; let's pray.