

**The Memorial Service of Joe Tsiakals:
July 3, 2026**

Over the past eleven years...
I have had the honor... and the joy...
Of getting to know...
Joe and Tyke.

And there are so many things.
That I want to say today...
Because Joe was my friend.

He was my friend...
From the very beginning...
Even when I didn't know him.

I found this book... at home...
About the day I was installed...
As pastor... here at Joy...

Apparently...
Joe was there...
Taking photos...
Of the people...
Who gathered that day.

Weaving in and out...
Documenting... the event...
Like it was something important...
And something to be remembered.
That was so nice of him... yeah?...

This book is just a snapshot of our life...
But it was part of my story...
That Joe captured...
And gave to me...
As a gift.

You might want to take a look...
Some of you are in this book.

Tyke told me...
That she has... many many of these photo books...
At home on her shelves.

But my point is...
If you knew Joe...
You know he liked stories.

He loved to hear stories.
He loved to document stories.

And most of all...

He loved to tell stories.
I'm not being mean...
But you know...
The boy liked to talk.
And sometimes...
They were very long stories.

One of my favorite memories of Joe...
Was at one of the men's retreat...
Up in Leadville at Brett and Michelle Specht's cabin.

We were all sitting around...
The kitchen table... talking and laughing...
And no we weren't drinking the ouzo...
That Joe sneaked in... to share...

But we were sitting there...
And Joe would start to tell a story...
Did I ever tell you about the time...

And one of the other guys...
Who loved and adored Joe.....
Would interrupt and say...

Joe... which story is this?
Someone else would say...
Oh this story number 138...
Then someone else would say...
No, no, no... it's number 63...

And this harassment would go on for a while...
But the funny part is...
Joe DID NOT CARE.
Not one little bit.
He was unflappable.

He would smile...
Because a little teasing...
Was not going to stop him.

So he smiled...
That disarming little smirk...
And he would just go on...
Telling us... his story.
And we listened.
We did.

We listened to Joe...
Because he was and always will be...
Our Brother in Christ.

And you also know... a hard part of his story...
Was all the health problems...
He faced over the past 10 years.

How he would have some issue or another...
I don't need to list them out today...
But you know what I mean.

These things also...
Did not stop Joe.

He would do what needed to be done...
Appointment... treatment...surgery...
And then he would move forward... again...
These things may have slowed him down...
But they didn't stop him.

He was incredibly resilient.

And even with all the personal concerns he had.
When e came to the men's prayer breakfast...
At his own pace... in these last days...

You all know... he led the breakfast... for years...
He facilitated the conversation...
He gathered up all the prayers...
And he was present.
He was with us...
Every time.

And this is what I really want to tell you.
When it was his turn...
To offer up his prayers...
To speak in front of these other men...

He would always...
And I mean... always...
Start the same way.

He would very intentionally... fold his hands...
And say... first of all...
I want to thank the Good Lord...
For my family. For Tyke.
For Nick and the Illinois family.
For Karen and the Ireland family.

He would say... thank you God...
For keeping them all healthy and strong.
Thank you for my family.
Every single time.
That was his prayer.

Then he would pray for Tyke's knee...
Or some other concern.

But I want you to know...
You were always first on his heart.
He loved you. So much.

And he wanted to give thanks...
To God... for all of you.

Now... when Tyke was cleaning up...
All the papers and various whatnot...
In the office at home...
She found something important.

Joe had a habit...
Of surrounding himself...
With positive saying...
Inspirational ideas...

And on this 3x5 index card...
He wrote... some quotes...
From Jack Welch...
The former CEO of General Electric...

Joe wrote... in his own hand...

- Control your destiny, or someone else will.
- Face reality as it is, not as it was, or as you wish it were.
- Be candid with everyone.
- Change before you have to.
- If you don't have a competitive advantage, don't compete.

See... Joe liked to gather wisdom.
Joe liked to engage the world around him.
Joe liked to live.
Like a sponge...
Soaking up all the life he could...

And yes...
We are here to talk about Joe's story.
And celebrate his life...
A life well lived.

And yes...
We can take time...
To focus on his many interests...
And passions...
And accomplishments.

But... for us... gathered here today...
The real reason we are here...
Is to talk about...

How Joe's Story...
Intersects and continues to be...
Enfolded within God's story.

Because you know...
Joe is a part of God's story.

Not only for the reasons we have already said...

And not only because of his personal commitment...
To God... his faith in Christ...
His good deeds... that he did in God's name.

Side bar... a quick example... did you know...
He will always be a part of this church's history.
He was council president...
When we took out the final loan...
To pay for this building.
He signed the paper work.

And thanks be to God...
Joe was here... to witness...
The day we paid off that loan...
When we all went out into the parking lot...
And burnt the mortgage.

But I digress...
It's all fine and good...
To talk about what Joe did for us...

For the men's group...
For the kids... and the scouts...
For his fellow soldiers...
For his career... his vocation...

For his family...
For his church...
For his country...
And for the world around him.

That's his story.

But today... we need to proclaim...
That Joe was an important part...
Of a bigger story...
There was more...
Happening in his life...
Than just his life.

There was a story...
That began at the dawn of time...
And will continue...
Until the fulfillment...
Of the Kingdom of God...

It's God's story.

It's the story of God...
Intersecting with humanity.
All of humanity.
Whether we grasp it or not...
We are a part of God's story.

And on the day...
When we celebrate...
And remember...
Someone we love so dearly...

I feel the need...
To let you know... that...

Joe is the reason...
That Jesus came into this world.
Not just Joe... but you too.
You are also the reason...
God sent Jesus.

But in this moment...
We are talking about Joe.
And God loved Joe... so much...
That God gave his only begotten son...
So that Joe... could gain...
Eternal life.

Or let me say it like this....

Jesus lived his life.
Died his death...
Was raised from the dead...

So that... death would not win.
Death would not have the power...
To overcome... or to take away...
Those who are loved...
By God.

No one can snatch us from God's hand.
We are protected.
We are eternally held...
Within the love of God.

And so... in the 1st Corinthian lesson...
Paul teaches us...
That there is a day coming...

When these perishable bodies...
Will put on imperishability.

When these mortal bodies...
Will put on immortality.

And when that day comes...
The saying will be fulfilled...

Death has been swallowed up...
In Victory.

O death... where is your victory.
O death... where is your sting.

You know the rest.
We have victory.
Through Christ Jesus our Lord.
Who overcame death and the grave...
And opened to us...
The way of eternal life.

Jesus did all that...
For US.

And Joe... is a part of US...
So even as we mourn...
We don't mourn as people...
Who have no hope.

We know... that death does not win...
Death does not get the last word...
Death does not have the power...
To separate Joe...
From the love of God...
In Christ Jesus.

What has been done... for him...
Cannot be undone.

What has been given... to him...
Will not be taken back.

God is true to God's promises.

When Jesus said...
I am the Way...
The Truth...
And the Life.

He meant it.

When he said...
All who believe in me...
Will live again.

He meant it.

So. The good news for us today... is...
Joe's story is not done.
It's still being written...
Into eternity.

And don't worry... it's God's story now.
Joe's story is... was...
And will always be...

A beautiful part...
Of God's eternal story.

And that makes me say...

Thanks be to God!
Amen.