

**The Memorial Service of Louise Goddard:
October 14, 2026**

I know.
This may seem like a strange way...
To start a sermon...
On a day like today.

But I really want to tell you...
About our youngest grandchild.
Her name is Ryleigh.
But I call her Pickle.

And like most precocious children...
She is a feisty little thing...
Only two years old.
But man... she likes to...
Talk... and explain... and wrestle... and run.

I call her Pickle...
And she adamantly says...
Papa... I'm not Pickle.
I am Ryleigh.

And I say to her...
You are my Pickle.
Because... I LOVE pickles.
And I love you.

And she smiles...
A sweet shy little smile...
And then runs off...
1000 miles per hour.

The reason I bring her up today...
Is because...
Last Christmas...
Several of our adult children...
And their families...
And their significant others...

Came to visit us...
And stay at our house.

Everything was so good.
The house was filled with people..
And activity... and noise.

Then we ate a ginormous delicious Christmas dinner...
And after that... we all settled in...
With our bellies full...
Lounging in the living room...
In food comas.

Just enjoying the day.
Being together...

When suddenly...
Something felt wrong...
I said... where's Pickle?

I couldn't see her.
I couldn't hear her.
It was way too quiet...
I knew... she was gone.

No one knew...
Where she was...

We started looking...
And calling out her name...
But when there was no answer...
You could feel the panic rising....

People became more and more frantic...
And began to run all over the house...
Looking down the stairs...
And into the basement...
She wasn't there.

And she couldn't have possibly gotten outside...
All the doors were shut...

We looked everywhere...
But she was nowhere to be found.

Finally... as a last resort...
It's always the last place you look...
I checked the closet in my bedroom...
I moved a bunch of hanging clothes...
Out of the way...

And lo and behold...
There she was.
Buried in mound of shoes...
Under piles of clothes...
Smiling at me.

I took this photo... **[PICKLE]**
To remember.
Not just how scared I was...
When she was lost...

But to remember...
How happy I was...
How relieved...
To know that she was... ok. **[NEXT SLIDE]**

I wonder if that's how God...
Feels about us...
As we make our way...
Through the twists and turns...
Of this tired old world.

I wonder if God ever thinks...
Where's Rod?
Is he hiding from me..
Again.

Is he lost and afraid.
Is he hurt and sad.
Is he oblivious and happy.
Is he just stubbornly...

Pushing his way...
Through this life...
To end up...
Where?

I wonder if God sees us...
As precocious. Adamant. Strong-willed.
Stubborn children.

I wonder if God panics...
When we hide from God's grace.

I wonder if God wants to make sure...
That we are ok.
That we are safe.
That we are somewhere...

Maybe just hiding in a closet...
Waiting... hoping to be found.

So in talking with you... Jeanette...
You mentioned...
Some really lovely things...
About your sister... Louise.

And I could see...
By the tears that rose to your eyes...

And the smile that came to your face...
How much you loved your sister...

And the nice words you wrote...
About how she carried...
The wide western sky...
Inside of her...

Open... bright... a little wild.

And I sincerely loved...
How you said she wasn't fancy...
In her faith... but make no mistake...
She was faithful.

And she would pray for you...
In the silence of her own heart.
She lifted you up...
To her God...

And she didn't need to make a show of it...
It was enough to know... she was praying... for you.

But it probably won't surprise you...
The thing that stands out the very most...
From everything you told me...
Is that she had a tendency...
To be a bit stubborn.

Actually... you said...
It was a common trait...
Of your whole family...

But sometimes...
Stubborn... got in the way.
Of peace... and healing...
And even... health.

But that's the way it goes...
Isn't it.

We all make choices.
Some of our choices are good...
And make our lives better...

And some of our choices...
Leave us in positions...
That are less than desirable.

Louise made her choices...
And she lived...
Her life.

But what I want to tell you today...
Is it's not our choices...

And it's not our stubborn attitudes...
And it's not the good...
Or the bad that happen to us...
During the course of our lives...

That determine who we are...
And what happens next.

It's not.
None of the things...
Of this world...
Get to define who we are...
In the sight of God.

None of the choices we make...
Get to define...
Who we are in eternity.

We are more...
Than just this world.

We are more...
Than what we do.

We are more...
Than our choices.

In one sense...
We are eternal...
We belong to God.
We belong to the God's Kingdom.

And as we live and move and breathe...
We have one foot planted... on this earth...
And the other foot... standing firmly... in heaven.

See. In the beginning... of her journey.
Somewhere along the line...
There was water poured on Louise's head.

There were words of hope and life...
That were spoken to her...
Whispered into her ears...
And planted deeply within her heart.
Even when she couldn't understand.

They were promises...
As big as the wide western sky.

They were promises made to her...
That far exceed... the troubles... or the joys...
Of this world.

And the promise was this.

She belongs to God.
And there is nothing...
In all of creation...
That has the power...
To separate her...
From the love of God.

Not life. Not death. Nothing.
She was sealed by the Holy Spirit...
And marked with the cross of Christ...
FOREVER.

That is the gift of eternity.
It began... in the waters of baptism...
And it is made complete...
In the promise of new life.

That's why Jesus said.

You don't have to be afraid.
Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Believe in God.
Believe in me.

I promise you.
There are so many places...
To live in my Father's house...
And I'm going there...
To make a place for you.

And when it's the right time...
I will take you with me...
So that where I am...
You can be too.

I will find you.
I will bring you home.
And on that day...
There will be...
So much joy.

In the kingdom of heaven.
Because... you have come home.

So that's it.
I just want you to know...
Beyond the shadow of a doubt...
That even though...
We may feel...
A little panic...
Now... that Louise is not...
Right here with us.

The same way I felt...
When my granddaughter...
Was hiding from me.

Don't worry. She's ok.
She's just out of our sight.
She's with God.
She's gone home.

She's in that place...
That Jesus prepared for her...
And for all of us.

It's a place...
Where there is no more pain.
No more sorrow.
No more weeping...
No more death.

For the old things...
Of this world....
Will be done.

And God himself...
Will live with us.
And wipe every tear...
From our eyes.

That's the promise.
Louise is home.
God is with her.
And all is well.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.