

## Desse Christensen's Funeral Remarks

Bishop Cameron Ford, April 19, 2019

Brothers and sisters,

It is a privilege for me to have a moment to share my thoughts and feelings on this sacred occasion. It has been a wonderful blessing for our Ward to get to know, serve, love, and be loved by, Jim and Desse Christensen. Their devotion and love towards each other gave us a wonderful example to follow. Their devotion to the Lord and His church continue to inspire us. Regardless of the obstacles and limitations, Desse was determined to serve in some capacity in our ward, ...and she did. We love her and will miss her.

Regardless of when it happens, it is hard to lose a loved one. As President Russell M. Nelson once said:

“...even when the elderly or infirm have been afforded merciful relief, their loved ones are rarely ready to let go. The only length of life that seems to satisfy the longings of the human heart is life everlasting.”

Funerals are often a time when we pause to reflect on the three big questions of life: Where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going after I die?

The doctrines restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith teach us that we are literal spiritual sons and daughters of God, organized by Him during the long eons before the earth was created. During that time we were taught of a plan whereby we could choose to become like our Heavenly Father if we were willing to pay the price. The price would be a willingness to be born into a mortal life filled with the possibility of much pain and heartache, as well as the possibility of much happiness and joy; and in many cases, large doses of both. The plan provided for a Savior that would love us, teach us, and redeem us, and, if we would choose to follow Him, lead us back into the presence of our Father in Heaven. The plan also required that we would remember nothing of our former existence. Such a forgetting was necessary so that our choices would be truly ours and not coerced by an absolute knowledge of the reality of things. Such conditions are the only conditions under which we could find out who we really are and what we really love. In a world full of voices that claim they have the answer, in a world full of powerful forces that push us to and fro, we are required to make a choice: Will we worship ourselves through constant pleasure seeking, pride, self-obsession, and constantly following the dictates of the natural man, or will we allow ourselves to be transformed through the power of Christ's atonement by worshipping the true and living God and His Son Jesus Christ through obedience and sacrifice? In the plan, the ultimate expression of that choice would be represented by our willingness to make and keep sacred covenants

with Christ through the ordinances of Baptism, Confirmation, and in the sacred ordinances of the Holy Temple.

In general conference earlier this month, our beloved Prophet spoke of his discussion of such things with his daughter, Wendy, as her mortal journey was coming to a close. As I thought about the passing of sister Desse Christensen, these words came to my mind. I could imagine similar things being said to her. Please think of her as I read the words spoken by President Nelson:

“As many of you know, our family experienced a tender separation three months ago when our daughter Wendy departed from this mortal life. In the final days of her battle with cancer, I was blessed with the opportunity to have our farewell daddy-daughter conversation.

I held her hands and told her how much I loved her and how grateful I was to be her father. I said: “You married in the temple and faithfully honored your covenants. You and your husband welcomed seven children into your home and raised them to be devout disciples of Jesus Christ, valiant Church members, and contributing citizens. And they have chosen spouses of that same caliber. Your daddy is very, very proud of you. You have brought me much joy!”

She quietly responded, “Thank you, Daddy.”

It was a tender, tearful moment for us. During her 67 years, we worked together, sang together, and often skied together. But that evening, we talked of things that matter most, such as covenants, ordinances, obedience, faith, family, fidelity, love, and eternal life.

We miss our daughter greatly. However, because of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we do not worry about her. As we continue to honor our covenants with God, we live in anticipation of our being with her again. Meanwhile, we’re serving the Lord here and she is serving Him there—in paradise.”

In a similar way, I echo President Nelson in saying that we do not need to worry about sister Christensen. She is happy. It is now ours to see that we choose to love, serve, and follow the Savior as she did.

I testify that Christ lives. He rose again on the third day. Because He lives, we will all live again one day. Most importantly, I testify that Christ is the way, and the only way, to a fulness of peace and joy in this life, and in the life to come.

And I do so in His sacred name, even the name of Jesus Christ, Amen