

Thank You:

Before I deliver the Eulogy, I'd like to take a moment to express my family's gratitude.

(inhale)

We'd like to thank Kevin, and the congregation at Reign church for gifting us this space to gather and honor Mike's life.

(inhale)

We'd also like to thank the many folks who helped us make today happen. (inhale)

Thank you to each one of my sisters, my mom, our friends and family, every acquaintance, and all of you for your time, love and support. We express our sincerest gratitude to you all.

(inhale)

I'd like to start this Eulogy by asking a question.

(inhale)

Have you heard the one about the 2 people in the woods?

It goes like this.....

(inhale)

There are two people in the woods, and they run into a bear.

(inhale)

The first person gets down on his knees to pray; the second person starts lacing up their boots.

(inhale)

The first person asks the second person, "My dear friend, what are you doing? You can't outrun a bear." To which the second person responds, (inhale)

"I don't have to. I only have to outrun you."

-pause and read/react to crowd's reaction.

(inhale)

To some folks starting a Eulogy with a joke may seem a bit off color.

(inhale)

Certainly it is unconventional, and I get that. But my brother was not a conventional person.

(inhale)

He was always had a joke ready to fire.

If you knew Mike, you know he would appreciate the gesture.

(inhale)

One of things that has stuck with me about Mike through all these years was the fact that he was a bit of a goofball. His whole life he could remember and recite jokes and their punch lines. (inhale)

I, on the other hand, have always struggled with that. I was always both perplexed and impressed by how well he retained all the details and the punch lines to so many jokes.

(inhale)

Unlike me, I had to write out and practice this one in fear I'd miss it. (inhale)

He was the only person my whole life who could consistently pull one over on me and I'd fall for his jokes, wise cracks, and traps every time.

I remember I'd be telling him something like Mike Guess what ...

(inhale) and he'd say "what?" I'd repeat what I was trying to share and he'd respond again with "huh?"

(inhale)

I'd repeat myself three or four times before he'd make eye contact with that slanted grin confirming he knew he'd caught me again and we'd both laugh. (pause, inhale)

He took any chance he could to make moments lighter and brighter even when stuff was weighing on him or times were tough.

(inhale)

He'd do stuff like record that outgoing voice answering message on his phone to do that thing where he'd pretend to answer and not hear you then say, "just kidding leave a message" or "you know what to do".

(inhale)

When we learned of my brother's passing, many of us wished it was some sort of twisted joke that we would one day forgive him for playing on us. (inhale)

Unfortunately, it was not. (inhale)

Mike had a unique and contagious laugh and a dorky half grin which replays in my mind often.

(inhale)

I can't help but smile even amid all this pain and the immense weight of this loss. (inhale)

My hope is that this can be true for you too.

(inhale)

Mike was inherently loving, gentle, generous, and kind hearted. (inhale)

Unfortunately, a lot of life happened to and around him and he often felt the need to suit up in armor that proved his toughness and sometimes gave the impression that he'd abandoned these parts of himself.

(inhale)

I assure you he did not. (inhale)

They were just masks he wore sometimes to create a greater sense of safety and to help navigate the challenges he was facing. (inhale)

Of course he could throw down if he had to, or felt like others needed protecting. But it wasn't his nature. Just in case anyone is thinking how I'd know this, he showed me and told me.

(inhale)

Many of the folks in this room likely have images associated with the various parts of him and that's okay, because they were all parts of him.

(inhale)

For example, we all know that Mike battled addiction and some of us know mental health issues as well.

(inhale)

I'd like to call attention to the fact that while my brother fought many battles he did have the upper hand many of his years. (inhale)

So, over the next few minutes rather than focus on his battles I'd like to share a bit more about the guy I was fortunate to know his entire life.

(inhale)

Several times in our adulthood I was blessed to have those weeks where he'd find me to retreat from the noise. (inhale)

In both his darker and his brightest moments, he and I discussed his fears, his dreams, his loves, losses and victories. (inhale)

The dude was bright! (inhale)

With him I had some of the best conversations I've ever had with anyone. (inhale)

He was super intelligent.

We'd discuss history, philosophy, religion, prejudice and racism. (inhale)

All of the things folks like to avoid, we'd discuss and have such enriching mutual enlightening moments.

(inhale)

He was naturally curious and had a passion for learning.
(inhale)

We can likely agree that Mike wasn't a big fan of structured contexts for learning but what I know is that he did like to learn and loved having knowledge.
(inhale)

I was lucky to get to share an experience with him in our 30s when we visited the Van Gogh exhibit at the Portland Art Museum that illuminated this for me.
(inhale)

We were viewing one of the famous Van Gogh paintings I'm pretty sure it was starry night...although the specifics may have escaped me.
(inhale)

What sticks though is how mesmerized Mike was that this was the infamous painting by this historical artist.
(inhale)

He was so into it that he was slowly inching forward until he found himself running his fingers on the frame.
(inhale)

Yes, Mike touched a Van Gogh. (inhale)

That was until the museum ninjas came out and the alarm sounded. Later that same visit we were viewing a canoe hand carved by some indigenous locals and got too close and set the alarm off on that too.
(inhale)

Setting off two alarms and being approached by security was clearly an indication of our lack of experience in this type of context,

(inhale)

but I left that day convinced that Mike was the most curious, appreciative, and the most interesting museum attendee I'd ever seen.

(inhale)

And he left being able to say he touched a Van Gogh which made him smitten. (inhale)

Additionally, He was one of the most loving and inclusive people I've met. He worked hard not to judge others, (inhale) possibly because he knew what it felt like to be judged by others.

(inhale)

He was gregarious. Olive, that's a fancy word for fun and outgoing.

(inhale)

He was personable and made friends easily. He'd literally give you the shirt off his back even when he didn't know if he'd be able to replace it for his own. (inhale)

I had the opportunity to meet one of his neighbors, Amber, shortly after learning of his passing and one of the first things she said to me as tears ran down her face was that (inhale) one of the nicest guys died there.

(Referring to where he'd been staying) (inhale)

and that she wasn't sure how she could be connected to someone so deeply after knowing them for just a week and a half

(inhale) that he was so kind and good and that their neighborhood felt safer with him in it.

(inhale)

This was true of him even in his darker times and as his time on our earth was ending.

(inhale)

That was him, a beautiful soul. (inhale)

Mike was loved and full of love. He loved nothing more than being a dad to Mikey, Jeweli and Kaylee.

(inhale)

He was so proud of each of them, and he saw them as his legacy, and you can see him in each of them.

(inhale)

A close second was his love for his mom, sisters, and family.

(inhale)

Being related or not didn't matter to Mike. Over the years he was a father figure to several others and genuinely loved the grandpa role he served in as well. And to Mike, friends were family too. And strangers were likely to become friends shortly after getting to know him.

(inhale)

Over the past few weeks I've tried to make sense of this loss like I imagine many of you have.

(inhale) I've settled on the fact that it just won't ever add up..

(inhale)

He was my little brother. (inhale)

Our brains tell us that people will live until an old age and then depart and that older siblings will die first.

(inhale)

While it's hard to reconcile that Mike is no longer with us.

(inhale)

I'm going to accept that it might not make sense to me ever. (inhale)

What I cannot let go of is taking some moments in hopes of finding a greater meaning in it, some sense of purpose.

(inhale)

In doing so I've reflected back on many of mine and Michael's philosophical conversations.

(inhale)

So if you'll stay with me a bit longer I'd like to share some of this with you. (inhale)

It is no secret that the loss of a loved one is hard, it's why we are all here today to share our memories and grief associated with the loss of Mike's light in our world.

(inhale)

And I know there is a ton of variability in beliefs about what happens after life in this room.

(inhale)

I respect them all and personally could make a case for or against each of them and I know Mike could too.

(inhale)

The fact is we don't know. (inhale)

I choose to believe there's a purpose and intentionality to it even if we can't quite grasp it yet because believing otherwise is just too bleak. (inhale)

This loss has rocked me like nothing else ever has and I've had my fair share of storms to weather.

(inhale)

It's also prompted more reflection, grace and love.

(inhale)

Look around this room. (inhale)

We are all here together in community because of it.

(inhale)

I see this as an example of what is meant by there's beauty in all things.

(inhale)

Mike being gone SUCKS! There's no doubt about that.

(inhale)

It cuts deep, but y'all I want you to hear this, we are the beauty in this.

(inhale)

Regardless of what we believe, I hope we can acknowledge that we are blessed to be breathing, laughing, crying, struggling, succeeding with our time in existence, however long that may be.

(deep inhale/exhale)

Let that sink in for a minute. (inhale)

We get to remain here, to be here. (inhale)

I recognize in these particular moments we sit in pain, I also know we feel that pain because we feel so much love for Mike and miss the love we received from him.

(inhale)

The truth is there is no pain without joy and no joy without pain.

(inhale)

And there's a ton of living and feeling between both polarities.

(inhale)

We all know that Mike had his struggles as we all do.

(inhale)

But he wasn't defined by them, none of us are defined by them.

(inhale)

And no one of ours is any greater or less than any one else's. We are the sum of all of our parts and all that's in between.

(inhale)

Struggle is just a part of our journey. But it doesn't have to be the totality, especially after the most difficult struggles.

(inhale)

Perhaps if we work at it and come through those struggles, we might be able to recognize a lesson or pick up new strengths we discovered along the way. And remember none of us can do this alone, we need each other.

(inhale)

And when we do get through, we can leave those struggles behind us, take what we've gained and look to what we have in our present and what may lie ahead in our futures.

(inhale)

Mike no longer gets that opportunity, but his passing and what it affords us now can be looked at as opportunity.

(inhale)

It is painful to have lost him. (inhale)

David Kessler says

(inhale)

Pain is inevitable, suffering is a choice. (inhale)
He also says, Death makes life important (inhale). I have to agree.

There is one thing that I wish might have been different for Mike in his time with us.

(inhale)

I wish he knew and felt his own beauty. (inhale)

That he saw himself how I see him. (inhale)

I don't know all of you well, but I know that there is likely a version of me in your lives too. Someone who sees your light even when you struggle to find it. (inhale)

So if in your darkest most trying times you find it difficult to see and feel your own light and beauty try seeing yourself through their eyes.

(inhale)

Perhaps even ask them to remind you. (inhale)

And if its still hard to see. Call me. I'll remind you that you are worth it. (inhale) You are loved and you are here.

(inhale)

My brother is no longer physically here but he was worth it.

(inhale)

He was loved, and he will be remembered.

(inhale)

And according to the law of the conservation of energy not a bit of him is gone.

(inhale)

It's just less orderly. (inhale)

It doesn't matter what any one of us believes in terms of the afterlife, be it based in science, atheism or God.

(inhale) any of it because that is most definitely uncertain for us until one day it is not and in that my brother now has an upper hand.

(inhale)

What is undeniable is that we are each still here.

(inhale)

In this moment we have each other and we are breathing, we are afforded the opportunity to exist and to live.

(inhale)

My charge to each of us as we continue living is to think about this by Ganga White.

(inhale)

What if our religion was each other? If our practice was our life?

If prayer, our words? (inhale)

What if the temple was earth? If forests were our church? (inhale)

If holy water- the rivers, lakes and oceans?

(inhale)

What if meditation was our relationships?

If the Teacher was life itself? (inhale)

If wisdom was self-knowledge, and if Love was the center of our being? (inhale)

Thank you all for loving my brother. I know he loved you all.

(inhale)

May you all recognize the beauty of your light in our

world.

Rest in Peace Little Brother.

With Love, Aish