

In a world that puts a great deal of store on status, we often judge people by the house they live in, the car they drive or even, when they die, by the numbers who turn out for their funeral.

We come here, the family and friends of Richard McIlhagga, for his funeral. His brother George has shared some of the thoughts and memories of his family, those among whom he lived and grew up, who watched over and cared for him throughout his life.

In this life in which we live, we can only play the cards that we are dealt. Life was not always easy for Richard, he did not have the peace and calm in his life that so many take for granted - but he is remembered as a gentle, as a caring person.

The point I am coming to here is that, whatever value the world may place upon us, we have an inherent value as individuals. A value in the eyes of those we love and who love us. We each bring distinctive gifts to bear on this world in which we live. Today, in the quietness of this place, I invite you all to come before God with your memories of Richard as brother, as friend and give thanks to God for all that was good and true in his life. We commend him to the love and care of his heavenly Father with the simple prayer that he might now be at peace. No more stress, no more darkness, no more pain. I come back to this point - We each have a value in the sight of God. We read in Matthew's Gospel:

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹ So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. *Matt 10:29-31*

For each one of us is made in God's image, each one of us carries something of the divine, each one of us is one for whom Christ died. Each one of us has a dignity before God.

On this day, we also we remember before God those who watched over him, who cared for him, his sister Jean and the rest of the family. In life you offered him love and support. On this, the day of his funeral, may you know something of God's presence and God's peace in your hearts.

We gather this morning to commend Richard, our brother in Christ, brother, uncle, friend to the care of his heavenly Father. As we do so we set our own lives in the context of eternity, our hopes and our fears, in the context of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying that he may watch over us and keep until the day of our own departure from this earth that we may rest in him as our hope is this our brother Richard does.