

Funeral Meditation
A Sermon Preached by Frank Mansell III
John Knox Presbyterian Church - Indianapolis, Indiana
June 12, 2018

Satish Pitamber
1936-2018

Psalm 139: 1-18
1 Corinthians 7: 14-16
Romans 14: 7-12

We are gathered today to give thanks to God and celebrate the life of a man who touched so many people. We have come together - as a family, as friends, as neighbors, as the community of faith - to share stories, to laugh, to cry, to remember. We have come together as children of God to comfort one another, to support one another, to strengthen one another in a time of grief and loss. We are gathered today to give thanks to God for Satish Pitamber, for a life that was truly well-lived.

As we have heard from his family already, Satish was a loving, devoted, hard-working man who many, many people adored and admired. He witnessed so much in his eighty-plus years, from his birth in India, to growing up in Pakistan, to his marriage to Mahmooda and eventually moving to the United States, to raising three beautiful children, to establishing a new home in this land with strong bonds of family and friends. As I read his vita and considered all he had experienced, I could not help but consider how wide a world Satish knew and appreciated. I believe it was through that broad life experience that Satish enjoyed a wide, encompassing view of God. God was not to be put in a small box - God was present in so many different, varied places and peoples, and Satish helped us all appreciate that in significant ways.

I have always been drawn to the words of the psalmist as he speaks of God's presence in our lives from even before we were born. God has been, is, and always will be there - before we speak a word from our lips, when we were knit together in our mother's womb, whether lay down or rise up - "O Lord, you have searched me and known me." I do not see that as something to fear - that we can never escape God's presence. Instead, it is a sign of God's comfort and strength and peace that is with us at all times of our lives.

The psalmist says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it." Satish was one who was not afraid to ask questions, for he loved learning and growing in knowledge. This included questions of faith, and I'm sure he felt the psalmist's frustration at times for not being able to attain all the answers of faith. But I also take

comfort, and I'm sure Satish did as well, in the knowledge that wherever we go, God will be there. "If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there . . . even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you." In our joys, in our struggles, in times of bright light, in times of deep darkness – God will always be there; God will always be.

We gather today to give thanks to God for the gift of love that Mahmooda and Satish shared in forty-six years of marriage, and how that love was embodied in their children, their grandchildren, and all of their family. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians that "the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband." I think that reflects the fact that in marriage, there are times of struggle and doubt, times of celebration and times of sorrow. And through it all, God is present in these partners in marriage to support one another, to encourage one another, and to make one another holy, as Paul puts it. Mahmooda and Satish embodied that image of the two becoming one in Christ, saving one another in faith and love. I know their family is grateful for this example they set, and we give thanks to God for their mutual love that touched so many lives.

When Paul writes to the Romans, he is reminding them that in all that we do, we are children of God. "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die we die to the Lord." So, whether we live or whether we die, we are always and forever the Lord's. That is of great comfort to me, and I hope to you as well. No matter what happens, we are the Lord's.

But Paul also speaks to a trait that was central to Satish's character. Paul asks, "Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God." As children of God, we are not called to treat one another worse than we would want to be treated. We are called to love one another as God has loved us. What good does it do for us to judge and separate us one from another? Satish firmly believed that, and lived that out in his embrace of family, neighbors, friends, and others. He was who he was, and he accepted others for who they were. What a powerful witness that is for each of us, to embrace each other without prejudice or animosity, so that each person might be welcomed as we are welcomed by our Creator.

We are grateful for the gift God gave each of us in bringing Satish Pitamber into our lives. May we bear witness each day to his life and all the saints of God who have shown us the depth of God's love for us in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen.