

Pastor Bill Mugnolo

St. John/Zion Parish

February 2020 Newsletter Article: "A Young Man Suddenly Dies"

In the time I've been with you, I've often noted how I am a New York Yankees fan. When it comes to football, I'm torn between the Browns and the Buffalo Bills. But when it comes to basketball, I'm all Cleveland here as I've closely followed and rooted for the Cavaliers over the past four years.

As a Cavs fan, I was stunned when I heard of the sudden passing of basketball legend Kobe Bryant at the relatively young age of forty-one in a helicopter crash outside of Los Angeles. Even in the midst of a Presidential Impeachment trial, this tragic story has caught our attention. Many in the world, it appears, are mourning his loss—especially in Los Angeles-- as if Kobe was some sort of Christ-like figure. But what might we, who are in Christ, have to say about this tragedy?

First, we see how someone might have the whole world in front of them and then, in a single instant, lose it all. Jesus once told a parable of a rich man who had his goods all stored away for years to come only to face a sudden, unexpected death that very night (Luke 12:16-20). The Lord warns us here, "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

Then, Kobe Bryant was a basketball icon, one of the greatest players of all time. Many fans even idolized him. But with his sudden passing, an idol has fallen for many as they must reckon with the thought, "He's human after all." Then, they must also deal with the thought—however much they might try to suppress it—of, "Someday, I will have to face death as well."

A Christian Commentator remarked about this sudden passing by wondering if Kobe was ready to meet his maker. This, of course, is known only to God Himself. But his tragic death will have the effect of causing many to consider that question that the commentator poses—maybe even for the first time. In a certain young man, Jesus Christ, who "suddenly" died within the course of one day for our sins, we have our true hope and treasure. May we share this hope with all who might be searching in the wake of the events of the present time.

Your Brother in Christ,

Pastor Bill