

**Calder Alexander Gibson II**  
January 6, 1932 - November 4, 2013  
Saturday, November 9, 2013

I'd like to begin with a quote from Calder's book, which is basically a set of 21 devotions for call committees. He writes,

*In a nursery of 10 crying babies a mother will be able to distinguish the wail of her infant from those of the other nine. Like fingerprints, our voices are one of the best ways to detect one individual from another. If Jesus had lived in the twenty-first century, He might have talked about the uniqueness of voice prints...*

*Jesus said: "The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep... He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out... He goes ahead of them and the sheep follow Him because they know His voice..."*

The Rev. Calder A. Gibson II was born and raised in Buffalo, NY. He was an acolyte at Holy Trinity Buffalo, NY, and proud of it, hence the cassock and cotta he is now wearing, hidden by the baptismal pall, and his casket, which he said should not be opulent, and jested might be made of paper mâché. He attended Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio and the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

He married Barbara Jean (Bobbie) and had two children, Calder III and Mike. Ordained in 1957, his first call was to Christ Lutheran Church, Wantagh, Long Island, NY. Then Incarnation Lutheran Church, Bridgehampton, also on Long Island for 11 years. After this he came to Texas to serve this congregation, House of Prayer. While here, they sent 8 families to start a new congregation, Christus Victor in 1981, where Pastor Tammy now serves.

In 1983 he took a call to Bethlehem Lutheran, Los Alamos, NM. From there they moved to Kentucky, where Calder was a hospice chaplain for ten years before retiring.

Calder didn't want much of a eulogy. His explicit instructions were, "just preach the gospel." So I will spare you the detailed biography, but we must pause to give thanks for his life and ministry. I must risk his wrath to pause and say thank you to you, his dear family, on behalf of a grateful church, for his service, and, for the sacrifices pastors' spouses and pastors' kids, Lord have mercy, make. Thank you. No effective ministry happens without a strong, often publicly invisible support system. When we see a pastor, we see the tip of the iceberg.

Calder, was an organized person. If you didn't know him well, an example. His Christmas cards are already stuffed and addressed. This is November 9. His next two months of newsletter articles are written and in Tammy's hands. He had purchased his urn, kept it in his office. And, for his funeral, as you might expect, he wrote a manual so detailed that we had nearly no decisions to make this week.

Amidst the pages and pages of instructions which he lovingly entitled, "HOPEFULLY HELPFUL HINTS UPON MY DEMISE." They are clearly more than "hints." They include minute details such as the placement of the crucifix, candles and prayer desk. They include a short biography, that begins with early childhood, moves to adolescence and onward, but then he asked for no

eulogy or detailed obituary. They include helpful notes such as "In the garage, near the door, on the west side, by the freezer are cabinets with exegetical notes for years A, B and C..."

He loved his family, the church, liturgy, gardening and order.

I've already said that Calder was no big fan of eulogies. His instructions were preach the gospel."

So here's what he would want you to know. He would want you to know that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

He would want you to know that God loves you with an everlasting love and there is nothing that can ever do to change that. He would want you to know that it is precisely this unconditional love and forgiveness that makes it possible for us to confront the brokenness in our lives and the brokenness in our world, for only when we can live in the security of being completely loved and accepted can we face up to our failings. Only when we are loved can we be liberated from self-delusion.

He would want you to know that God loves every sinner, every addict, every thief, every prostitute, every murderer, because God has a soft heart for sinners. There is no life beyond God's redemptive reach. He would want you to know that God can use every sinner to accomplish that purpose the world. This God has an easier time working with a humble sinner than with a self-righteous hypocrite.

He would want you to know that God is like a loving parent not an angry judge. God is like a shepherd who will leave the 99 in order to seek the one lost sheep, then throw party with all the angels.

He would want you to know this Good Shepherd leads and guides. He restores your soul. This Shepherd is always with you, always near, even when you don't feel it. This God is quietly and invisibly here, like the wind that blows through the world. Close your eyes and feel the wind blowing in your life.

Calder would want you to know that the wind of the spirit breeds into your life love and joy that she and patients kindness gentleness faithfulness and breathes into your life tremendous love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, generosity and self-control. All of this is available simply for the asking. This Shepherd is alive and present even when you walk through the valley the shadow of death. Especially when you walk to the valley of the shadow of death.

He would want you to know that this Wind/Spirit/Shepherd God who moved over the face of the deep, became flesh and dwelt among us. He would want you to know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the image of the invisible God.

He would want you to know that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He created all things, that nothing was made without him. That in him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. He would want you to know that that word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory full of grace and truth.

He would want you to know that if this God is for you that nothing can be against you, for there is nothing in all creation that can ever separate you from the love of this God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Neither height nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing in your present past or future that can ever separate you from the love of this God in Christ Jesus.

Calder would want you to know that there is more to life than meets the eye. Life is a mystery. When you look at the universe you see the tip of the iceberg. God's house is big - really, really big - bigger than you can possibly imagine with many many rooms and that Christ has gone to prepare a place for you, so that when you breathe your final breath, as Calder did on Monday, when your body, this earthen vessel, this cracked pot, returns to the stardust from which it came, that is not God's final word, for now we see in the mirror dimly, but then we shall see face to face.

Be not afraid you who are both sinners and saints at the same time.

Rejoice in the gift of life.

Give thanks to the one who created you.

Trust the one who died and rose again.

And sing hallelujah to the spirit who blows within you. Amen.