

## Celebration of Life Service for David McAtee

June 15, 2020

Matthew 14:13-21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

### Feeding the Five Thousand

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup>When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup>Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Luke 14:13-23 New International Version (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup>and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

### The Parable of the Great Banquet

<sup>15</sup>When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

<sup>16</sup>Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. <sup>17</sup>At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

<sup>18</sup>“But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

<sup>19</sup>“Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

<sup>20</sup>“Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

<sup>21</sup>“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

<sup>22</sup>“‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

<sup>23</sup>“Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.

Matthew 19:13-14 New International Version (NIV)

## The Little Children and Jesus

<sup>13</sup>Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

<sup>14</sup>Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Eileen Fisher of Spectrum in Lexington wrote that Louisville barbecue chef and Ya Ya’s BBQ business owner, David McAtee, 53, was celebrated on Saturday during his homegoing at Canaan Christian Church in Louisville.

“He was a giving person. He was sharing. He was one who protected those close to him,” said Rev. Mario Martin of Praise Nation Church.

McAtee was shot to death by a Kentucky National Guard member while at his YaYa BBQ business in West Louisville on Monday, June 1, when Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) and the Kentucky National Guard were dispatched to 26th and Broadway to enforce the city’s curfew at the time.

Hundreds turned out to Saturday to pay their respects. One of them was renowned chef Edward Lee.

Lee is converting his downtown Louisville restaurant, Milkwood, into the "McAtee Community Kitchen" that is slated to open on June 15.

Lee says the kitchen will carry on McAtee's legacy by creating opportunities in the west end.

“Though I can’t say that I knew you well; I can say that I knew your spirit. You were a chef. You loved your community. You are a kind soul. You fed people who need it again, and again, and again,” Lee said.

This wasn’t a funeral. It was a homegoing that celebrated McAtee’s life that’s now going home to the Lord in heaven. Bishop Dennis Lyons of Louisville said his life and others didn’t die in vain.

“God has used David. God has used Breonna. God has used George to make our spirit strong,” Lyons said.

McAtee was laid to rest after the funeral with family and friends gathered once again at Green Meadows Cemetery to say their final farewell to the man they loved so much, as a son, brother, uncle, and friend.

In the 3 ½ years that David McAtee worked as a chef at our Unity House family shelter, I saw him at least 3-4 times a week and I never had a negative or even just neutral, run of the mill interaction with him. David’s greeting was always prefaced by his huge, uncontainable smile and his consistent question to ask how you were doing. He was a very hard worker and at his happy place in the kitchen. He knew his way around a kitchen and was dedicated to only serving a high-quality meal like he would serve his own family members. He took pride in his cooking but even more so he took great satisfaction in people enjoying his cooking as that was his true measure of success.

He never let his fatigue show, and I’m sure there was a heavy measure of it at times. He brought such a passion to his work that never wavered even during times of stress and occasional long hours. He genuinely cared for the residents in the shelter and that showed in every encounter with them. He was a kind, caring soul and his interest in the families enjoying themselves at meals and their overall well-being during a hard chapter of life in the crisis of homelessness was evidenced in his consistent, compassionate care for them.

I recall that at one point someone wanted to donate a combination ping pong/air hockey table to the shelter and I, being an avid fan of pingpong was so excited at this prospect. Yet when a few staff raised the issue that the kids would need

some good supervision so as not to get into conflict and maybe a scuffle with the paddles and to take good care of the equipment and each other, and I knew from working there 25 years that the staff was on point about that concern and whether we had the capacity. David heard about the discussion and volunteered to keep the paddles and balls in the kitchen and to keep an eye on the kids for any problems that might arise. I remember that he said he really wanted the kids to have fun things to do and he couldn't bear the thought of them missing out on pingpong and air hockey fun. And they didn't miss out because of his generous spirit and good heart. Putting himself forward and taking action for the good of the community came so naturally to him. It was embedded in his good soul, rooted in kindness.

I invite any of you that knew him to share a story or a thought or if you didn't know him but would like to express well wishes for comfort for his family and friends and VOA colleagues, please feel free to. No pressure and this is completely voluntary, but I wanted to give you the chance and the space.

When I heard of David's death, it was very hard to take in. I know his good heart never intended ill for anyone – that is just not who he was. I want to light a candle for him now to represent the light he brought into this world as he fed not only the physical bodies of many, but he fed spirits as well. And when we think about his death, I want us to think of this Prayer of Passing, as I believe it describes what was happening with him at his moment of passing.

### Prayer of Passing

By Anara Solray

Know that everything you do and everything you have done has been a contribution to the Whole. Bless-ed be who you are.

When the time comes for your Eternal Spirit to leave this Earthly body...

Your wings will unfurl, the breath of the wind will uplift you, and you will be born anew without effort.

For where you are going, there is no pain, no fear, no heartache. There is only love.

You will breathe one last breath while your spirit occupies your physical body, and with the next in-breath you will breathe a breath of great Light.

You will feel more love than you have known for a long, long time. For you are going Home.

In the turning of the seasons, the love within your heart, the love of your being  
has expanded into fullness and now settles in peace to rest.

In the dawn of ages, your spirit has celebrated your essence which, once again, is  
to be made new.

In the flowing of the rivers, know beyond a doubt of doubts the truth that your  
spirit is truly one with the Divine Whole.

One Heart...One Mind...One Spirit...One.

You are the blessing. You are the peace. You are the love.

You are the Light within the holiness.

You are the Flight within the freedom.

You are the Essence in the center of the blossom.

This is who you are, and much, much more.

Much, much More

David was a fabulous chef but much, much moreso than that he was a fantastic human being that made space for people in his life and was a positive influence on them because he genuinely loved them. And in the midst of our sadness and sorrow, we remember that death does not have the final word and never overcomes love. The sadness we are feeling reflects the loss of his physical presence and is not to be minimized and we are grieving, but the goodness he brought into this world carries forward, in our hearts, in our actions, in our continuous caring for others as he did. We honor him by carrying it forward.

I want to close with a song called Thanksgiving Eve because I know that David felt gratitude for his life and we certainly are feeling it today and going forward.

### **Bob Franke - Thanksgiving Eve**

It's so easy to dream of the days gone by  
It's a hard thing to think of the times to come  
But the grace to accept ev'ry moment as a gift  
Is a gift that is given to some

What can you do with your days but work, dream & hope  
Let your dreams bind your work to your play  
What can you do with each moment of your life  
But love til you've loved it away  
Love til you've loved it away

There are sorrows enough for the whole world's end  
There are no guarantees but the grave  
And the life that I live & the time I have spent  
Are a treasure too precious to save

As it was so it is, as it is shall it be  
And it shall be while lips that kiss have breath  
Many waters indeed only nurture Love's seed  
And its flower overshadows the power of death

David's life was a precious treasure and the influence of his life goes on. I found online a Chef's prayer and I think if David were to be here physically today to pray with us his prayer might go like this:

Dear Lord, I am at home in the kitchen. May others feel at home as they enjoy the food I prepare. I love the smell of baking. May others enjoy the fragrance of heaven's hospitality. I love to follow a recipe and make a beautiful meal. I cherish the variety of tastes given to us in this incredible world. May others who dine with us hear our prayers of thanks and enjoy the blessings of food. I am at home in the kitchen. May my kitchen be full of love.

And I will add that it certainly was full of love, thanks be to God. And thanks be to God for the life of David McAtee. Rest well, my dear friend. Amen.