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Everything I Learned About Giving a Eulogy I Learned from a Science Fiction Novel

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Everything I Learned About Giving a Eulogy I Learned from a Science Fiction Novel

“She is, she was—what can there be more said?
On earth the first, in heaven the second maid.” – epitaph for Queen Elizabeth I

“What we hunger for perhaps more than anything else is to be known in our full humanness, and yet that is often just what we also fear more than anything else. It is important to tell at least from time to time the secret of who we truly and fully are...” – Frederick Buechner, *Telling Secrets*

“No more lies, no more pretense. Tell your neighbor the truth.” Ephesians 4:25 (The Message)

A. The Questions

B. The Challenge

C. The Argument

D. The Science Fiction novel: Orson Scott Card, *Speaker for the Dead* (1986)

E. How Scripture Depicts the Dead

Scripture narrates the dead as flawed but graced creatures, broken but not abandoned by God.

F. Theological Reflections on Speaking a Good Word

1. God defines our idea of good speech.
2. Our calling as human beings is to speak good words as God speaks them.
3. To speak a good word is to speak a truthful word about both the living and the dead.
4. The truthful word about the dead involves care-filled and honest words.

G. Church leaders must teach Christians how to speak a good word about the dead.

1. **What is a good word?** A good word tells the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help us God.
2. **What is the purpose of a good word?** The purpose of a eulogy, on specifically theological terms, is that its listeners might walk away astonished at the grace of God—that despite the flawed, broken nature of the dead person’s life, the grace of God appeared in all sorts of surprising ways.
3. **What kind of community practices enables the good word to do its good work?** We will not be good at telling good words about the lives of the dead if we have not practiced speaking like this our whole life.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.