

King of Glory Lutheran Church  
November 6/7, 2021  
Year B: 21<sup>st</sup> All Saints: John 11: 32-44  
Rev. Debra Abbott

***John 11:32-44***

*<sup>32</sup>When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”*

*<sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup>Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” <sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”*

***Revelation 21:1-6a***

*<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; <sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” <sup>5</sup>And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” <sup>6</sup>Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.*

Even though June of 2022 is many months away, my mother's extended family is already planning the Johansen family reunion. We have cancelled it the past two summers because of covid. And because so much time has passed, when we gather together this coming summer, as I hope we will, it will be a joyful gathering. There will be babies and children, brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles and even distant cousins visiting from Denmark.

At this family reunion we will do what we always do when we gather. We will rejoice over new family members. There will be children who have been born and people who have joined our family by marriage. And we will remember those who have died. We will share stories and pictures and memories of those who have gone before us. Those we have loved and remember gathering with us in years past.

This family reunion will be a time of joy and sorrow, tears and laughter all in the same gathering, all in the same time, all in the same family.

This weekend the church celebrates All Saints. I think it is a little bit like a family reunion. On All Saints we remember especially those who have died in this past year. We say their names. We make space for grief. We mark time. And we also remember those who have died over all the years. People we continue to hold close in our hearts.

It might be a good time to remember that our saints are remembered on All Saints not because they performed miracles or led perfect lives, but because they are children of God. Loved and known by God. Living now in the fullness of God's presence. Saints are all the people we remember and give thanks for especially on this day.

Now I know that death is not something most people like to talk about much or dwell on. Death is an uncomfortable topic for many, whether it be the death of a loved one or our own death someday.

That makes All Saints all the more important because today we make space to acknowledge death and grief and loss, things that sometimes we desperately try to avoid.

We are not alone in the experience of grief. Jesus knew death and grief and loss.

In our gospel reading from John we meet Jesus at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. The community has gathered to grieve. Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters grieve. And Jesus grieves. He weeps.

Jesus weeps for Lazarus. He knows loss and the painful reality that someone loved is no longer there. Everything has changed. And so Jesus cries the tears of one whose heart is broken.

We tell and know this story in John 11 because of the raising of Lazarus. But before Jesus calls for Lazarus to come out of the tomb there is death and there is grief.

John 11 is the story of a man who gets sick and dies. His family and friends mourn his death. They do all the things that need to be done when someone dies. This is a story of a man who lived thousands of years ago, but it's a story many of us know firsthand. We know illness and death, we know unexpected loss, we know the questions, the pain, the anger, the confusion, the grief that come with death.

Today we hear this story of the death of Lazarus and the grief of his family and friends. We see Jesus there, in the midst of death and grief, weeping. He knows the pain we know. He is overcome with grief, just as we can be.

The gospel of John begins by telling us that *"the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14) And we see this born out in this story today. We see Jesus in the flesh living among us, experiencing love and loss just as we do.

Today we also heard a reading from Revelation. Revelation shares a vision had by a man name John while he was on the island of Patmos. There is a lot that John sees and hears in this vision. And at the conclusion of Revelation, John hears a voice say, *"See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; <sup>4</sup>he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away."* <sup>5</sup>*And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."*

We are reminded today in a profound way that God has made God's home with us. Past, present and future. God lives with us in our joys and in our sorrows. And God promises that the day will come when death and grief and pain will be no more.

We need to hear and know these promises today. God is with us. God grieves with us. Death is not the end. God brings life from death in ways we want to understand but cannot see clearly now.

And these are not promises that only give us hope for the future. Jesus says, "See, I am making all things new." Jesus is not only with us in suffering and death and grief. He promises that he will continue to be with us. That there is more to come. That He can bring something new even when we think there is nothing beyond our grief and loss.

A friend of mine named Pastor Chris Davis shared with me something important about this story in John's gospel today that I think is easy to overlook. Jesus asked the people gathered there at Lazarus' tomb to roll the stone away. And then when he called Lazarus out of the tomb he asked the people to unbind him. Small details.

Jesus could have rolled that stone away and helped Lazarus out of his grave clothes himself when he was alone. But he asked the people there that day to be a part of this story and a part of this new thing Jesus was doing. Jesus was with them in their grief and he asked them to be a part of the revealing of new life.

There is no place, no pain, no loss that can keep us from the love of Jesus. His voice and his power and his love come to us when we are lost in grief, when we think life is over, when we can't see the possibility of anything new.

Listen for Jesus' voice today. Listen as he calls to you. Listen as he invites you to be a part of new life, shining light and love into the darkest of places.

As we remember the saints today and we listen for Jesus' voice I know that we can each find one way to honor the memory of a saint in our life. To share with someone else the joy, hope and love we know from our saints.

This day is not only a day of remembrance, it is a day when Jesus asks us to be a part of something new. To be light in the darkness. To bring freedom to those who are not free. To love when our hearts are broken.

So today, give thanks for all the saints. Remember them with tears and laughter. And listen for the voice of Jesus calling each one of us to see what Jesus is making new in us and our life. Because Jesus is calling out to you and to me to share the hope, light and love he has given us. Amen.