



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year B – Feast of All Saints – November 4, 2018 Fr. Kealawe Hee

John 11:32-44 The raising of Lazarus

Death touches us all.

All Saints' Day is the one day set aside during the church year to tend to our grief. We experience grief on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but that grief is for the suffering and death of Christ.

All Saints Day is for us.

For remembering the people we loved.

Who were important to us.

Who made an difference in our lives and then died and left us behind.

Grief is one of life's most powerful human emotions, and grief is often very lonely. Many of us have awakened on the morning after the death of a loved one and simply wondered at how the sun can rise another day and the Earth can continue to turn after our world has been shattered.

But we go forward. And we realize that our personal tragedy really matters very little in the big picture of the whole world. A massacre of worshippers in a synagogue, an airplane crashing, life goes on.

But today, our grief matters. On All Saints' Day, in God's Holy Church, on this holy ground, we can all share in the losses that we have suffered over the years. On All Saints Day, we are no longer lonely and isolated in our grief, but we gather in this sanctuary and let our grief join us together in a new and powerful way.

All Saints' Day helps us re-enter that place of mourning in a rhythm, year after year after year each November. Slowly, as the heat and humidity of summer slowly passes and changes into the rainy, windy Hawaiian winter around us, so we bring up the pain of loss on purpose in this rhythm, year after year.

And as years go by, when we remember the loss, the pain will ease. Every time we remember our loved ones among the saints, we honor not only their lives but our own long battle with memories both painful and joyful.

And it is so important to honor these memories.

Most of our departed loved ones had a funeral to commemorate them. But the funeral happens right after the loss and often our emotions are completely raw and everything around us seems chaotic. If you have lost someone close to you, either due to a sudden accident or long illness, you probably remember the days in the immediate aftermath as a haze of confusion.

You were probably numb. You were asked to make decisions you didn't want to make. What about this? What about that? Many of us float through the funeral in a sort of disconnected shock.

“Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God.” . . . Queen Emma.

Feast of All Saints – November 4, 2018, cont'd.

This is where All Saints' Day comes in. Today there is no chaos, there are no arrangements to be made, no being singled out to sit at the front of the church in a black suit or dress, no planning of the food, or choosing flowers. Today, we are all in this together, and the only thing we need to do is remember the ones we love, the ones who are no longer with us.

It's the chance to be private about our grief, taking out our memories in the quiet of our hearts and turning them over one by one, taking our time to remember and reflect. And we can do that here, in this Cathedral, on our own, but at the same time, together.

As you see the faces of your dearest departed loved ones before you, and cherishing the chance to do so peacefully and uninterrupted, your neighbor is doing the same. We enter the valley of the shadow of death together, and walk through it together with one another.

There is someone else who is with us in our grief, and that someone is Jesus. In our gospel today, we see him in the exact situation we all have faced in our own lives—the inevitable but painful death of a loved one. His friend Lazarus had been sick, they all knew there was a possibility he might die. But even Jesus can't quite believe it at first. He doesn't want to believe it, and asks if he's been buried, hoping maybe the message has gotten twisted along the way and Lazarus is still just sick.

“He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus began to weep.”

Prior to this, Jesus saw so much pain in his lifetime and he didn't cry. He saw the injustice faced by his people. He saw the hungry and the poor. He saw people suffering, tormented by demons, paralyzed, blind, and diseased for years and still he didn't cry. He continued his ministry and cared for them. But here, at last, he breaks down, and for the simple loss of a beloved friend. Nothing grand or dramatic. One of his best friends gets sick and dies, and Jesus weeps. And so today, we can also identify with Jesus' sorrow. He always bears the burden for us.

Maybe today we can say, “Jesus, we understand how you feel. We're sorry you lost your friend. We love you. Come be with us for a while and we'll all be in this together.”

Jesus brought his friend back, just as on the final day we will all be brought back to life by him to live with him and in him. And how did Jesus raise Lazarus up to new life? How did he bring him back from the dead? By calling his name. “Lazarus, come out!” Today, call out the names of the ones we loved who have passed on, and they will answer. They are resurrected in our hearts, and brought to life in this time and place.

So today we remember the saints who have gone before us into their new life in Christ. And we remember the ordinary saints who sit next to us, in front of us and behind us in these pews.

So we laugh even as we cry.

We hope even as we despair.

We celebrate even as we mourn.

We all want to be with our loved ones. As the communion of saints joins their spirits with ours today, remember we are also being called by the ones we love who have gone before us.

Amen.