

“All Saints”

The Rev. Ryan Wiksell



November 3, 2024
All Saints' Sunday
St. Michael's Episcopal Church
Independence, MO

May I speak with the Breath of God, from the Word of God, in the Name of God.
Amen.

- Jesus' miracles are always inspirational to read about
 - Growing up, I had a pastor who would read about Jesus healing the blind, or the disabled, or the terminally ill...
 - And we would get really excited.
 - He would build up and build up till he got to the climax of the story
 - Till he came to the point where Jesus shouted "Lazarus come out!"
 - Then he would pause, quiet himself, and map his brow, saying,
 - "Brothers and sisters, if that doesn't light your fire, your wood is wet."
- That was the preaching I grew up on
 - Obviously I ending up going with a different style
 - I don't shout like that. If anything, based on some of your feedback, I preach too quietly.
 - And I don't need a hankie up here because I don't tend work up a sweat.
 - But I feel like I get just as excited by Jesus' works.
- To be honest, what excites me most is not the miracles themselves
 - It's how often Jesus asks regular people to participate in them.
 - Water Into Wine
 - Miraculous Catch of Fish
 - Man Born Blind, washing in the Pool of Siloam
 - Peter Walking on Water
 - Feeding the 5,000
 - Healing the Royal Official's Son
 - Money in the Fish's Mouth
 - **Lazarus Raised from the Dead**
 - Jesus told the people nearby to roll away the stone
 - And what did the people say?
 - "But Jesus!"

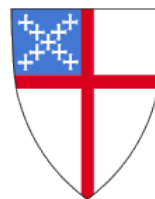
- Do you ever hear yourself saying that? “But Jesus!”
- As if Jesus needs a reality check from us.
- We love Jesus, he’s great! But you know, he gets a little crazy sometimes and we have to reel him in.
- They said “But Jesus! It’s been four days. It’s going to stink.”
- I love that this is the people’s objection
 - Not, “this is impossible” or “the stone is heavy” but “it will smell terrible. Don’t make us smell that!”
- Reminds me of the main character in an old animated show called The Critic:
 - He was a movie critic, and his catch-phrase, that he used on basically every movie he reviewed was “It stinks!”
 - And this had become his brand image. “It stinks!”
 - I’m hearing the friends of Lazarus the same way. Open up the tomb, are you crazy? It stinks!
 - We know better than to move that stone.
- But what I want to know is this... what is behind that stone for you?
 - What kind of life is there waiting for you?
 - What surprise is waiting for you?
 - What miracle is waiting for you?
 - So why aren’t you moving it? What are you afraid of?
- I’ll tell you what I’m afraid of...
 - I’m afraid of change.
 - I’m afraid of astonishment.
 - I’m afraid of losing this identity I’ve built up so carefully around all my problems.
 - My grievances define me!
 - Just like the Critic. Positivity would have ruined him.
 - And Lazarus’ friends were there to grieve. If it turns out that a person who’s dead for four days can live again, what’s next?
 - No... this world of ours may be messed up, but it’s home. We’ve found a way to make it work.

- The blind are just blind. Five loaves and two fishes are just five loaves and two fishes. Water is not for walking on. And after a few days, dead people start to stink.
- It's just the way it is. Accept it.
- But Jesus tells them not to accept it.
 - Jesus reminds them that they will see great things if they believe
 - So they say, "OK, Jesus. We'll move the stone, but don't say we didn't warn you about the smell."
- And we all know what happens next. Lazarus lives.
 - And I normally try not to split hairs when it comes to Scripture
 - But I want to ask you: what was the exact moment that Lazarus came back to life?
 - Was it when Jesus showed up? Was it when he prayed?
 - Some might say it was the moment Jesus shouted "Lazarus come out!"
 - But that doesn't make sense. If Lazarus was dead until that moment, he wouldn't be able to hear Jesus shouting.
 - No, I believe Lazarus was resurrected the moment the people believed
 - The moment they moved the stone
 - Which means... Jesus may have prompted the miracle. But it was the *people* who did the miracle.
- And THAT is what inspires me and excites me about this miracle of Jesus
 - That he didn't do it to show us his power
 - He did it to show us *our* power!
- And this is the perfect day to notice our own power
 - To consider what kind of life is on the other side of the stone for us
 - One, because this is All Saints Day, and we know from Scripture and from my Newsletter that we are *all saints*.
 - And two, because we are welcoming new family members today in the Rite of Baptism.
- Kenzie and Lenzie might not be old enough to fully grasp this

- But they are old enough to feel it. They are old enough to know when they are being minimized, or overlooked, or shamed.
- And they are old enough to know when they are being affirmed and empowered and respected
- The rest of us in this room are all old enough to understand the power that Jesus is vesting in us
- And we're old enough to know how to affirm and empower and respect Kenzie and Lenzie, as well as every child and every adult we encounter.
- Because this is exactly what saints do!
 - You may object to this definition of "saint"...
 - You may be aware that, in order to be officially canonized as a saint
 - A person must be known for having performed at least two miracles
 - We hear that and we say "Well I'm out." But we're not!
 - Just like with the Water into Wine, or the Feeding of the 5,000, or the Resurrection of Lazarus,
 - Jesus is putting *his* miracles into *our* hands.
 - Which means, we are all qualified.
- On this All Saints Day, let us declare that we are ***all saints!***
 - But it's one thing to be a saint, and another thing to live like one.
 - So let's embrace this moment of new beginnings, and celebrate together.
 - Let's reaffirm our Baptismal Covenant together...
 - And commit ourselves to going forward in abundant life, in miraculous life, and living like saints.
 - Amen.

The Lessons Appointed for Use on All Saints' Day

Year B
RCL



Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9
or Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 24
Revelation 21:1-6a
John 11:32-44

The Collect

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Old Testament

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace.
For though in the sight of others they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.
Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.

In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.
They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them forever.
Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.

or

Old Testament

Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

The Psalm

Psalm 24

Domini est terra

- 1 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, *
the world and all who dwell therein.
- 2 For it is he who founded it upon the seas *
and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.
- 3 "Who can ascend the hill of the LORD? *
and who can stand in his holy place?"
- 4 "Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, *
who have not pledged themselves to falsehood,
nor sworn by what is a fraud.
- 5 They shall receive a blessing from the LORD *
and a just reward from the God of their salvation."
- 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, *
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; *
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 "Who is this King of glory?" *
"The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle."
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; *
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 10 "Who is he, this King of glory?" *
"The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory."

The Epistle

Revelation 21:1-6a

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. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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;
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."

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."
Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

The Gospel

John 11:32-44

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."
When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep.
So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone.
And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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." When he had said

this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 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."

Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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