

Jesse Perkins
Wednesday, November 2, 2022
Year C All Souls Requiem

Wisdom 3:1-9
Psalm 130
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
John 5:24-27

“In the name of our God, who created us, who loves us, and who welcomes us home.”

- Thank you for being here tonight, and I mean that
 - Thank you for taking the risk to come, the risk to feel, to grieve, or even risk moments of deep contemplation
 - Services like this in my opinion are the often the deep ones, sometimes difficult ones, and absolutely the essential ones
 - Essential in a well rounded faith and life, that includes not just the celebrations, and happiness, and excitement, and energy
 - But that stops for a brief evening to let in, even if just for a moment, the harder parts of being human, and being a child of God
 - The greater questions of why, and what’s next, and what does the hope we have in God really mean of me
 - To remember the experiences of loss, heartache, grief- these are just as much apart of the human experience
 - But are often glossed over by larger society because they make people uncomfortable or awkward
 - If you have lost someone close to you, then you probably know that there are very few people who know what to say or do around you after
 - It’s not their fault, really, just as a society we tend to prefer to stay in the happy parts, right?
 - But here, tonight, we have a moment of grace and quiet to touch that part of our life that has the capacity to deepen our life and our faith.
 - I am certainly biased, but I believe the church does this best
 - It makes room for the not-happy experiences that life is going to throw at us, and gives us a place incorporate them
 - In the spring we have Good Friday that comes before Easter Sunday
 - We have tonight, the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed, or All Souls, to balance out the very happy celebration of All Saints
 - We are in what I call our "Fall Triduum"
 - And I think if we show up, if we if just a moment open up to these offerings, they can bring fruits of the faith like no other experiences

- I have thought about these experiences that come in our tradition and liturgy as guides for us on an ancient grief process
 - Before we had Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and her 5 phases of grief
 - The church was designing an experience that ushered us through them
 - That promised that when they come, God is there
 - And that offered a larger framework and lens through which to see and experience our joys and our sorrows
 - This week in particular, we start All Hallows' Eve. This is the crazy, silly, joyful part of being human
 - Of doing crazy things like going door to door and asking for candy, and eating too much of it
 - Of dressing in silly costumes, and even enjoying the Macabre ("ma-KAB")
 - I have enjoyed this season dressing up as Snape from Harry Potter, and watching that 80s movie Hellraiser
 - And that is an important part of life- having fun, being crazy,
 - And even approaching the horrors of life with a spirit of denial that it can actually hurt us.
 - Then there is All Saints Day, which was actually yesterday Nov 1, but gets transferred to this coming Sunday
 - But on the calendar it comes next in order, because after such frivolity we need a little framework for what it means to live a good life
 - Not just to live a fun life, but to live a good one, a meaningful one, one that in the end is not wasted on the shallow things
 - So we talk about the Saints, the ones with the capital S, the ones that have lived lives worth imitating
 - And depending upon how saints fit in to your own theology and faith, cheer us on and pray for us as we also run our race
 - On Sunday, we will honor St. Vincent whose relic is here in our altar, and bring a new person into the family of God through Baptism
 - And then we have tonight, All Souls, because life is more than frivolity, but includes it
 - More than trying to just live a good life, even though it certainly includes that too
 - It is also experiencing loss and grief, and everything that comes with it
 - And in the end accepting our own mortality
 - And putting all of that in a framework of God's love, faithfulness, and hopes for us
 - We understand death, loss, and grief come to all of us, even those who live a good life, even those who believe and worship God

- Tonight we have the chance and the challenge, the necessity even, of bringing all of this together into a well-rounded, deeper faith
- Richard Rohr has recently written about a similar idea, and he referred to as our “ripening.”¹
 - He wrote for an entire week back in September in the daily email devotions about a concept he called ripening
 - Or growing into the fullness God intended for us, that spans our entire life and finally peaks at the end
 - I liked that- it wasn’t that we peak somewhere in our middle life, but instead we continue to ripen throughout our life all the way to the end
 - I will put the link into the sermon blog for this evening, if you want to go back to it and read his writings
 - He is some of what he says,
 - “Ripening, at its best, is a slow, patient learning, and sometimes even a happy letting go—a seeming emptying out to create readiness for a new kind of fullness—which we are never sure about.”
 - “If we do not allow our own ripening, an ever-increasing resistance and denial sets in, an ever-increasing protection around an over-defended self.”
 - “If we are to speak of a spirituality of ripening, we need to recognize that it is always characterized by an increasing tolerance for ambiguity, a growing sense of subtlety, an ever-larger ability to include and allow, and a capacity to live with contradictions and even to love them!”
 - “To live in trustful faith is to ripen; it is almost that simple.”
 - He goes on to talk specifically about physical aging as a slow process of ripening, of embracing the truth that our lives will end one day
 - And I think no matter our individual age tonight, it is on nights like this that we can plant ourselves in fertile ground that helps us ripen, or deepen, spiritually
 - We ripen spiritually all the days of our lives until the day comes when return to our source
 - We return back into God, the one who created us, and we are loved and welcomed home
 - We return to where those who have gone before us are
- Tonight by being here, we risk feeling sad, re-living loss, or even touching the reality of our own mortality

¹ <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/a-ripening-mind-and-heart-2022-09-18/>

- And I am glad to be here with you in the midst of it- in the deep end of the pool
- This is where we grow, deepen our roots in our faith, and “ripen.”
- This is where we learn and feel in our deepest being of beings that God is behind, beneath, and above all of our life
- From God we come, in God we live, and to God we return
- And our faith, our belief of who we are and whose we are, gives us our hope
- Because God looked at us, at all of us throughout time, at you and me
 - And said, I cannot let them just live and then blink out of existence
- I created them, I love them too much, they are my children, and I am creating a way through death for them to return to me
- While this life will include joy and sorrow, love and loss
 - In the end it is love and life and joy that will triumph
 - Hope can still exist in their hearts.
- I want to leave you with one of my favorite collects from our prayer book, sometimes said during the Burial service:

Lord Jesus Christ, by your death you took away the sting of death: Grant to us your servants so to follow in faith where you have led the way, that we may at length fall asleep peacefully in you and wake up in your likeness; for your tender mercies' sake. (BCP 504)

Amen.