

All Saints & All Souls 2018
St. Andrew's Kelowna
The Rev'd A Privett

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In the Name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit Amen.

Happy All Saints & All Souls! It is so wonderful that you are here as we combine these two important days to celebrate together. A special welcome to the friends and families of those whose funerals were held at St. Andrew's this year. We are so grateful you have come.

I received a Facebook message from a good friend of mine a few days ago. He is a cancer survivor and he is running the New York City Marathon in support of Cancer research this morning. Matthew made himself a t-shirt which he had signed by everyone who has supported him through the cancer; this bright yellow shirt is covered in the signatures of family, friends, doctors, others survivors, some who didn't survive. He sent me a photo to show me where he'd signed my name and I was deeply moved. Matthew is running the race set before him with all the many people who have helped him find life.

As we gather for All Saints and All Souls today we as the church are doing much the same thing. We believe that life does not end but that it changes when we die; that all those who have gone before us are alive in Christ. We pray for them because life is not over – Christ is loving them, healing in them the whatever was unresolved for them in this life. And we believe that they pray for us, surrounding us, encouraging us and as we struggle through our lives of faith. Today we remember all of them, and all those whose earthly life was an example of a holy one. We celebrate even in our grief because we are surrounded by them still, surrounded by a great communion of saints through the centuries. Being a part of the Body of Christ we are in a sense clothed in all of the names, all of the people who have gone before us and now continue to support us and uphold us in our journeys to life and freedom.

And whether grief is immediate and raw for us today or casting its long shadow down the years, we are given the gospel story of the raising of Lazarus that begins with a God who knows grief; with Jesus weeping deeply at the death of a good friend. And so we start together today knowing that Christ grieves with us and is with us in all things. We believe in a God who knows grief and suffering, a God who died on the cross and therefore is never the cause of that kind of suffering or death, but rather God in Christ is the hope, the love and presence that gets us through, that holds out for us joy and new life in the face of death. The story of Lazarus reveals to us that God's almighty love and power is not that which randomly chooses to avert a crisis or change old age even though we wish it was and we hear as Mary says, as we might have said, 'if you were here Lord my brother would not have died'. But rather

God's almighty love and power, we learn, is the much deeper and harder work of bringing life out of death, healing out of brokenness, love out of despair. In our gospel story Lazarus is resuscitated and brought back to life and with it the beautiful actions make metaphor in which we can find ourselves: the coming out of the tomb, the unbinding and the letting go, the coming to life. The work of the Spirit is about bringing to us to life in a new way while we are still living; giving us glimpses of eternal life before we get there, unbinding whatever it is that holds us so that we might let go... into the freedom of God. These are rich images of newness and fullness of life that remind us not only is Jesus working new life in each of us but also for the whole world. Our reading from Revelation calls this a New Heaven and New Earth and gives a glimpse of our hope, of a mind-expanding vision of a completeness and fullness of love where God is at home on earth. A vision and hope and conviction to which the saints have witnessed to through the centuries. Saints are people who knew and bore God's unbinding and healing in their own lives not just for themselves but for the life of the world. And they lived the hope of a renewal of all creation with a particular intensity right in the midst of everything.

So remember today that God is with you and working in you right the middle of everything. That the whole communion of saints is supporting you right in the middle of everything. As the saying goes: "Be still....Watch and listen. You are the result of the love of thousands." Thousands of saints who are all, as we are all, the result of the love of God in Christ. May our love result in hope, in glimpses of the new heaven and new earth God is working among us.

Amen.