

## The Promises of God Prevail

By: Meagan McLaughlin

November 7, 2021. On this All Saints Day, in this sacred space, grief and hope intertwine as we acknowledge death and new life together in this community.

Readings: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#), [Revelation 21:1-6a](#), [John 11:32-44](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

Death and grief is something that we often don't want to talk about. At times, in fact, we will go to lengths to avoid talking about it. But on All Saint's Day, we come together intentionally to remember those who have gone before us. We name the losses we have experienced, especially remembering those who have died whose lives have impacted our own. Today is a day for remembering those we have lost, and celebrating again the promises of our baptisms — the radical love of God who formed us in the womb, forgives our sins, and gives us life that endures beyond death. And so, we opened worship today by blessing water with the word of God — the waters of baptism with which we celebrate and recognize these promises.

Our readings today tell us that we don't need to be afraid to acknowledge the realities of death that are an integral part of our human existence. Isaiah tells the people who are facing the grief and pain of exile and death that, in the midst of the very real tears, God is present, and God will wipe away the tears and remove the shrouds. Revelation speaks of the new heaven and earth that are promised — on the other side of death.

And in our gospel from John, Jesus has the courage to face the harsh realities of death. He arrives at the house of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to find that Lazarus has been dead for four days. Jesus goes to the place where Lazarus was buried, in a cave sealed with a stone.

John tells us that Jesus was greatly disturbed and moved, and Jesus weeps, sharing the grief that is felt by Lazarus' sisters and the rest who loved him. And then, he asks to have the stone rolled away from the tomb. The others protest, saying that the body will smell horribly, now that he has been dead for four days. But Jesus is not afraid to face even the most unpleasant and final details of death. Even the stench of death does not deter him, John tells us.

Today, we face the mortality of our human existence. We remember those we love who have died. We acknowledge our grief and our loss. We celebrate the love and joy of the time we shared with those we loved who have died. And we claim once again the promises of God that were celebrated on the days of their baptisms, and trust that Isaiah, and Revelation, and the Gospel of John in their claims are true: death will never be the final word. We remember the enduring promises of God for each and every one of those who have died, especially those we will name today.

And then we will turn, as all the prophets and Jesus did, to new life. We will wait on God, who wipes away tears and removes shrouds. We wait on God, who will make all things new. We stand at the tomb with Jesus as Lazarus wakes from death and comes out, alive once more. We join with the community around Lazarus, as Jesus invites us to remove the shrouds binding his arms and legs. We experience with all of our senses the truth that death will never be the final word. Our life on this earth is finite and our bodies will pass away, but in Christ this is not the end of the story. God does not abandon God's people. Though death will come, God's promises of life will always prevail.

Life will always prevail, and new life is coming. It is so appropriate that on this All Saint's Day, we celebrate again the promises of God with the baptism of Jack Jordan. One more time, the water and the Word of God come together as we witness the grace of God's love and forgiveness for each and every one of us, and especially today for Jack.

This morning, in this sacred space, grief and hope intertwine, as we acknowledge death and new life together in this community. God is present, and always has been, from the beginning of time, from the first breath of our lives to the last, to the end of time when all will be transformed and made new. The promises of our baptisms hold true, even to death.

Thanks be to God.

\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\*

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