

All Saint's Day, 2006  
Text: Matthew 5:1-12  
Trinity Lutheran, Worden, IL & Zion Lutheran, Carpenter, IL  
Pastor H. R. Curtis

✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today the Lord invites you to open up your ears so that you may see. That is how Christians see: with their ears. For your eyes cannot be trusted. Your eyes see hardship in this life and you would learn from that that God is displeased with you, angry with you, against you. You see a loved one die, and your eyes tempt you to think that they are dead. You see the Divine Service – and you are tempted to think that it is just a man in a funny costume holding up bread and wine for all to see and adore. This life is hard, you've lost friends and family and still can't imagine life without them, and you're tempted to think that all this Jesus business is just so much prattle, so much Hallmark smarm, so much wishful thinking.

Repent. Open your ears and learn that it is your eyes that lie. You feel weak and beaten down by hardships that are too much to bear – but do not fear, God is not angry with you and he has not abandoned you. For blessed are the poor in spirit – yours is the kingdom of heaven. To be poor is to be emptied out – so if you feel

emptied out, know that God has made it this way so that he may fill you up with every blessing – indeed with himself. Yours is the kingdom of heaven. You mourn but you will be comforted. For as the Psalmist says “though weeping last for a Night – joy comes in the Morning.”

Weeping and joy. Night time and Morning. That promise of Scripture is not a general promise about something you might be sad about. Plenty of times in this life you have gone and you will go to bed weeping and wake up just as sad as when your head hit the pillow. God does not deal in greeting card platitudes like “sleep on it and you'll feel better” and “time heals all wounds.” We all know that's nonsense. No, when God says that weeping will last for a night, but joy comes in the morning – he is talking in capital letters, he is talking about the Night and the Morning. He is talking about Jesus. Jesus who wept tears of darkest woe on the Evening of Good Friday, but who had the joy of the resurrection on Easter Morning. And that Evening and Morning make for one New Day.

For there on the cross Jesus is preparing to fill up your emptiness and comfort your mourning. There on the cross Jesus is undoing death by dying death to death. There on the cross, the Lord of Life, who is the Resurrection and the Life, goes down to death with the weight of the sins of the whole world on his shoulders.

He is the Lamb of God – he is the sacrifice – he is the one who cries out “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” so that you will never have to cry like that. He suffers all the punishment of sin so that you might receive all the glory of righteousness. He dies the Big Death so that you never have to.

And then up he comes from that death! Up he comes to the Big Life! Death no longer has mastery over him because death didn't know what it was getting into with Jesus. The sinless Son of God fulfilled the Law perfectly, and yet chose to suffer death for sinners – and that was the end of death. One Big Death did death in and now Life reigns again. And all who are baptized into Christ Jesus are alive with him. For them there is no more Big Death for they have already died that Big Death with Jesus when they were Baptized into his Death and pulled up out of those Baptismal waters into his resurrection. And that's why Jesus says about your loved ones who die in the faith: “He who believes in me, even though he die, will live. And he who lives and believes in me, will never die.”

The dead we name this day before the Lord are not dead, but alive. Yes, they have passed through the little death that awaits us all. There is no escaping that and there is no sense in trying to sugarcoat it. This little death is still horrible, it is still the last enemy to be destroyed – but it is defeated. The jig is up for death. Jesus

has defeated it and he is returning to destroy it forever in his Resurrection life. And when he returns, as St. Paul says, all those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will return with him to receive their new resurrected bodies. You shall stand with them in the kingdom of heaven in tangible, glorified bodies. You shall sing praises to the Lamb of God with them just as they praise him now.

And in fact – you do praise the Lamb with them even now. Do not forget: don't trust your eyes. You may not see your loved ones in the pews – but here at the Divine Service you are with them. Remember: trust your ears. What does the Divine Liturgy say: “Therefore, with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name, evermore praising Thee. . .” Yes, even now, with all the company of heaven we join in praising our God. Even now, they live and praise the Lord and pray for the Church still on earth. Each time you receive the Lord's Body and Blood at this altar you also have communion with those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. For the Church is one body, made so because we partake of the one body of the Lord.

So trust your ears: the Word of the Lord does not know how to lie. Today you will be with me in Paradise. If a man live and believe in me he shall never die. Take courage, your sins are forgiven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall

be comforted. This is my Body, given for you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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