

Rev. Beth J. Costlow

Psalm 24

November 7, 2021

All Saints' Sunday

Prepared for: Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville SC

- Death, Destruction, and Darkness
 - Some specific traumatic, deadly events affect us as a community
 - JFK assassination for people older than me
 - Space Shuttle Challenger was my first memory of such an event
 - Others can be described with only a word—maybe a few words.
 - Columbine.
 - 9-11
 - Katrina
 - Sandy Hook
 - Mother Emanuel
 - Others are more personal.
 - I can still tell you the date my divorce was finalized.
 - My parents' death dates.
 - The date of my son's first seizure and hospitalization.
 - Truth: All manner of sin, division and brokenness shadow our entire world, not the least of which is death.
- Eight saints' deaths have been grieved at LCOS this year.
 - Rachel Kluizenaar, Toni Counts, Doug Bell, Angel Perez-Huerta, Jerry Schulz, Boyce Cockman, Lois Kurtz, and Nancy Riskevics
 - Whether or not you were close to any of these sisters and brothers, you do have experience with death—and with grief.
 - No one gets through life without experiencing death.
 - No one gets through life without experiencing grief.
- Death, Destruction, and Darkness
 - They often seem to rule in our world, don't they?
- Today's Gospel needs some background.
 - Lazarus was sick, on the verge of death. Mary and Martha, his sisters, sent word to Jesus.
 - His response? Hurry and get to his friend's sickbed, right?
 - NO!
 - He tells the messenger that Lazarus' illness "does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory."
 - And then *he stays away for two more days.*

- Finally, four days after Lazarus has been buried, Jesus makes it to town.
- Now we're at today's lesson. Mary comes to Jesus, kneels at his feet and cries, "If you'd been here, this wouldn't have happened!"
 - Jesus, grieving, asks where Lazarus' body is.
 - And Jesus wept.
 - The Savior's response to death is the same as yours. The same as mine. God weeps with us.
 - Jesus doesn't get angry with Mary's reprimand. He weeps with her.
 - And as the walk together toward Lazarus' tomb, the crowd around them complains. "Couldn't he have stopped this from happening?"
 - That question is never answered. Obvious answer: Jesus is God so, of course he could have prevented it.
 - Obviously, that's exactly what Mary expected. She knew Jesus could have prevented her brother's death. That's why she sent for him.
- Jesus wept. But that's not where Jesus' response ended.
 - Jesus does something no one expects. He goes to the tomb and demands that it be opened.
 - "What? Are you nuts? That man's been dead for four days! He's going to stink to high heaven!"
 - Raw chicken remnants in your kitchen trash can? Dead body smell.
 - Human remains are no better.
 - "Haven't I told you to have faith? Haven't I told you that you will see the face of God if you do?"
 - Finally, they remove the stone.
 - And Jesus shouts, "Lazarus, come out!"
 - And of course, Lazarus walks out of the grave, still wrapped in the cloths that enfolded him when he was placed there.
- Death, Destruction, and Darkness
 - God's response? Weeping right alongside humanity.
 - Even as the Lord weeps with us, though, Jesus promises us that something else lies ahead.
 - Death, destruction, and darkness are not the end of humanity's journey. Jesus brought Lazarus from the grave. God brought Jesus from the grave.
 - And with that act—the resurrection of Jesus—we have hope in knowing that God will put an end to all forms of death, destruction, and darkness.