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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.