

All Souls Day
2 November 2025
Lamentations 3: 17-26, 31-33; John 6: 37-40
Sermon

We all come to this All Souls' Day service with different experiences. Some of us have lost loved ones recently; some many years ago. Spouses and life partners; parents, brothers and sisters; friends and colleagues. Some were brothers and sisters in Christ; others may not have professed a faith in God.

Some of us have come with grief that is still raw, even if the loss took place long ago. We are struggling with the loss of a loved one and struggling to find a way to live without that person.

Some of us have come with grief that has changed over time, so that we may have found a way to live with the loss, holding sorrow together with love.

Some of us have come with grief aggravated by the age at which our loved one died ... too young ... too old. Or our grief is intensified by the way they died. That has been my experience. Or our grief may be tinged with regrets and tensions that were not resolved, words said or not said, things done or not done. I have lived with that too.

Each of us comes today with our own, unique form of grief. As the book of Lamentations puts it, 'Is it nothing to you, all who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow?' There is no sorrow quite like my sorrow, no sorrow quite like your sorrow.

But although we are unique in our grief, we are united in the fact of our grief. We may pray privately and silently in our hearts for our loved ones, but today we come together in corporate worship, to name

them, pray for them, and commend them to God. When we name our loved ones, we stand alongside each other in our grief, we support each other and hold each other in love.

Our grief also unites us with Christ. We can be confident that when we weep, Christ too weeps in our tears. The man who wept when his dear friend Lazarus died, the man who experienced the trauma of torture and abandonment on the cross, he weeps with us and shares in our grief.

All people are made in God's own image. What God made, God loves; and what God loves, God welcomes and will not allow to be lost. This is Jesus' clear word, recorded in John chapter 6: 37-40, which we just read.

When we name our departed loved ones, we can also be united in hope. Jesus says this promise twice, 'I will raise them up on the last day.' 'I will raise them up on the last day.'

Now, Jesus does not promise to spare us from physical death, nor from what must come before death, but he does promise to raise us to new life on the last day. Our hope comes from knowing that the love of God is stronger even than death. The love of God for us in Jesus was so strong, strong enough to transform Jesus' death on the cross into new life.

And God's love promises the same new life for us all. As Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, 'For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

In a short while, Betty and Liz will read the names of our departed loved ones. If you haven't been able to write a name on the list, please name the person silently in your heart.

Let's love them and pray for them in death as we loved them and prayed for them in life, holding them up to God and commending them to God's keeping. And let's pray for each other, supporting one other in our sorrow and but also in our hope.