

SERMON

“NO MORE TEARS” *Preaching text: John 11:32-44*

Today is All Saints’ Day. It is the Church’s Memorial Day. We remember those who have died in the last year, especially those from our own congregation. As we do each year, in a few minutes we will have the tolling of the bell followed by the names of the people who have died from Good Shepherd this year. This year we have three names: Karen Kubar, David Adamcik and Adelaide Dornbush. You will have the opportunity to name off people you know in the past year who have died.

Right after this worship service Kurt and I are going to be racing to the airport to catch a flight to Arizona. We had planned on visiting my parents in November, but a couple of weeks ago my Uncle Ted died. So, we are still going to Arizona, but it is for a funeral as well as to visit my parents. So, I will be lifting up my Uncle Ted’s name during our Roll Call of the Saints today. I encourage you to think about whose name you might lift up.

Our gospel for today includes the shortest verse in the Bible John 11:35 simply reads, “Jesus wept.” Crying is a part of mourning. Anyone who has lost a loved one knows that. Maybe some will be crying as we lift up names.

Do you know what brought Jesus to the point of tears? It was seeing other people suffer in mourning. Our gospel goes like this: A friend of Jesus named Lazarus was very sick. He was the brother of Mary and Martha. They were all friends of Jesus. So, when these two sisters realize that their brother is near death, they sent word to Jesus. They needed Jesus’ help.

It took Jesus 2 days to get going and then 2 days of travel time, so 4 days total. The 4-day mark is important. There was an ancient belief that the life force of a dead person’s body stays in close proximity for 3 days, then after that there was no hope for life. John tells us in two places that Lazarus has been in the tomb 4 days. So, before Jesus got there, Lazarus was undeniably dead ... dead beyond dead.

When Jesus arrives Mary says, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” If you have ever been angry at God because a loved one died, you know how Mary felt.

Have you ever started crying because someone else was crying first? That happened to Jesus. He sees Mary crying, the people around them crying, and the Bible says Jesus was “greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.” So, he starts in on the crying.

It hurt Jesus to see someone he loves in pain or distress. It hurts God to see us suffer. Jesus wasn’t crying because Lazarus had died. He was crying because of the pain in Mary’s heart. She hurt and therefore he hurt.

But Jesus knew that death was nothing to be afraid of. Death is a part of God’s plan. Jesus didn’t raise up Lazarus just to give him another few good years on earth. He did it to glorify God. He did it to show that God has power even over death.

And when Jesus raised Lazarus it wasn’t forever. He’d die again. But the same guy that wrote our gospel for today wrote the Book of Revelation. In it we see a much more permanent way we will relate to God for eternity. John describes a time when from the throne of heaven will come these words: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

So, as we celebrate All Saints’ Sunday there are two images I’d like to suggest thinking about: One is Jesus standing beside you as you mourn today. Jesus knows when we are hurting and suffers with us. The other image is the Eternal God of all creation wiping the tears from His children’s eyes. One day there will be no more tears.

When we are mourning we might feel alone, terribly alone. But we are not. There is One who cries with you. There is One who will one day wipe every tear from our eyes. This One has power over life and death. This One is Jesus Christ.

AMEN.