

I don't know anyone goes to Arlington National Cemetery (even up the road at Leavenworth National Cemetery) not struck by awe. Row after row after row of gravestones. Names, dates of those who lay there who gave so much for the freedoms we now enjoy. White stones mark service, duty, sacrifice. Reverent awe at the tomb of the unknowns, the precision of the guards. Great care goes into maintaining that place because of what it means -a place of honor, respect. An important place to remember those who laid down their lives for our nation, and remember Friday, Veterans Day. But it's a place never meant to be. God created the world, He didn't create cemeteries, He created a garden, created us to live, not die. The earth was never meant to contain bodies of man. Sin brings death into the world. Cemeteries are our creation.

Our Lord comes to address this. Jesus didn't just come to give life. Even more, He came to take your sin, your death. His duty and sacrifice -takes all of our life-stealing sin upon Himself. All of it. For you -hurting you, sinful you -Jesus came and entered sin and death and cemeteries of our creation.

**Salvation belongs to the Lamb**, He brings life from a cemetery! Defeated death, dies for us, how then can His children die?

For what Christ has won for us, which He bestows in His forgiveness and abundant gifts and life, we sing. Scripture shows God gave us a voice to confess this truth in song. Even when burdened, lives in chaos, when afflicted with sorrows. Sing. We distinctly sing at funerals, that those who mourn have the song of salvation, song of the resurrection resounding in their ears. I don't know who can sing the hymn, "Behold a Host" we just sang or "For All the Saints" think upon those words without tearing-up, at least on the inside. Tears, we miss them, we still hurt. Tears for what joys are theirs already now, tears that you will embrace them again in paradise soon.

Whether it's been months or years since they died, you never "get over" grief. You get on, you get by, you adapt to the loss of their presence. But you never quite get over their death, nor should you. Your heart still aches. Hardly a day goes by. But you are comforted by the Lord Himself. That is enough.

You are blessed by Jesus. Blessed. Do you realize what Jesus means in those beatitudes of the gospel? What is blessed? Makarios in Greek. The beatitudes are taught by most as "if-then" statements, if you do this, then you're blessed, it's God's spiritual rules, virtues you must do to be blessed. It's not true! They're wrong. Those beatitudes are of sweetest gospel for you. Jesus is telling you who you really are in Him. Every time Matthew uses Makarios it deals with salvation -present and eternal. Blessed is saved. Blessed is receiving His kingdom, His daily works upon you. His death. His resurrection. His life. Blessed is to be with Jesus -now, forever.

When I give Holy Communion to people on their death beds. So far, it hasn't restored any to health. Many tears, comforted by Christ. It was the medicine they most needed. It prepared them for paradise with the saints because it brought to them the risen Body and Blood of Jesus and washed away all their sins.

**This is the feast. This is song of creation, Blessing, honor, glory, might be to our God, the Lamb forever amen!** You're blessed for Christ Himself comforts you. You know what lies ahead; as they are, you soon will be. What glories await you, you blessed. This is what drives us. We must limit ourselves to the limits that Holy

Scripture reveals to us and rest in His promises. We cannot fully understand why a loved one dies when they do or why we don't have loved ones or answers to everything in life we wrestle with in a way that can convince us or an atheist or skeptic. Rest in His promises. We know God is good, we believe Jesus sacrificed for you is risen and reigning and destroy the power of sin and death.

So in life, you may get sad even if your dog dies, I don't blame you. You're right in being sad but Jesus lives! He has promised you a new creation. Will that give you everything you want in the way you imagine? No, it will be far greater than that.

I get this question too, how aware are people in heaven, of us here on earth. Well, we don't exactly know. We know Jesus gives a story that shows awareness. Revelation chapter 5, saints in heaven are praying for us; and Hebrews, we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. But do they know everything going on? And I hear this, they must not know, because if mother knew how much pain or trouble I go through she'd be sad and she can't be sad in heaven. Or if they knew what evil, sinful things we do in secret they'd be sad. And my response is, I don't know. But I absolutely know they would not be sad because your loved one is at one with the will of the Father. And they believe without any doubt, He works all things together for good. So if they see things here, they see the Lord working good beyond your reason. Do you think the Lord is watching David and Bathsheba and wringing His hands in sadness. Of course the sin is offensive, but He knows David will repent and learn and write psalms to sing the Lord's praises in the congregation of the living. There's that Palm Sunday hymn, Ride On Ride On in Majesty, that says, angels look down with sadness to see the approaching sacrifice. No, they are not, but celebrate His passion.

Jesus confesses against all reason and experience as He goes to the cross for you. This is reality throughout our lives, what happens in our experiences and our reason but we don't believe it. We do this every time at a funeral and cemetery and say, **O grave where is your victory?** And you could think, its right there, you see a dead body in a casket. Our, your loved one dead. How can we say, **O grave where is your victory?** We are confessing a greater reality. Saying what's true. What God promised. Jesus lives. His Word true. The grave is a lair for no one who believes in Jesus ever dies. They are not dead, while their body sleeps.

Your future is beyond all thought. So Tuesday, do your civic duty, pray, and come what may in this life. Ultimately it doesn't matter what happens Tuesday, or your regrets, your failures, or what care you'll have when your old; or money woes, diseases, or whether your dreams come true here.

What matters! What endures! The Lamb who was slain, lives. He will bring you home. And you will not miss out in anything this life has to offer on this earth, or time with loved ones; you will have all things in heaven, with Christ, your loved ones, eternity. Our cemeteries are only temporary.

Therefore with the angels and archangels, all the company of heaven, that's your loved ones, gathered around the Lamb -His altar, one Holy Communion. You are His blessed saints. Not that you've earned it or deserve it, you aren't good enough but He made you one. Saints. Holy, forgiven, His. That's who you are. Now, forever blessed in Him.