

## All Saints

*Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

John 11:32-44 (EHV)

32 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and troubled.

34 He asked, "Where have you laid him?" They told him, "Lord, come and see."

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

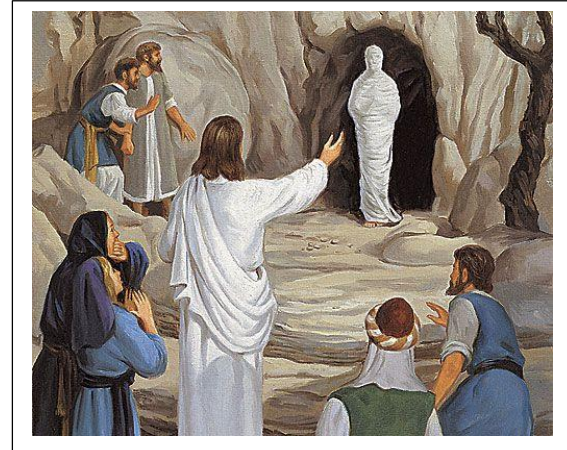
38 Jesus was deeply moved again as he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 "Take away the stone," he said.

Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, because it has been

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone.

Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." 43 After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

44 The man who had died came out with his feet and his hands bound with strips of linen and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them, "Loose him and let him go."



*Dear heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit on us so we may believe Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has defeated death and gives us life eternal through faith. Amen.*

## 2, 3, 4,5

Can you say two, three, four, and five,  
as Lazarus walks out alive?  
From out the grave his body came  
when Jesus shouted forth his name!

You wonder why we start with two,  
but here I give to you a clue:  
you might think this to be absurd,  
but count the letters of each word.

When faced with trouble, pain and grief  
we often ask the question 'if'?  
'If only this...', 'If only that...'  
Here Mary with this question sat!

'If' only has two letters, true!  
You wonder what this means for you,  
but let me ask if you have cried  
the word of 'if' when someone died?

For example, when someone you loved died, have you ever asked such questions as:  
"If I only had more time with them! If I only had told them what I wanted to say to them!  
If only I had acted differently!"

On the other hand, you may have had some other thoughts, such as:  
"If only God would have answered my prayers! If only God had stopped that accident!  
If only God had healed them! If only God would have been there, then this wouldn't  
have happened!"

Your cries of 'if' are very natural, but there's rarely a happy answer to such  
questioning cries of protest and grief. Your 'if' questions leave you hanging with  
uncertainty, and the more you demand an answer to your questions, the longer you'll  
suffer with grief and loss.

Also, when you ask questions of God and his mercy or timing, you seem to challenge  
him that you know better than him. You might think you know best, and God's done  
the wrong thing by you. You wonder why God didn't obey your bidding. In your grief,  
you might be tempted to tell God off or question his love or power or wisdom.

Like Martha had already asked earlier, Mary also challenges Jesus about not being  
there for them. She laments to him about her brother's death and vents a little of her  
anger and frustration that Jesus could have, but didn't, do anything about Lazarus's  
dying.

But, just like your own cries of 'if only...', Jesus never answered her question or  
accusation. Instead, he asked her a different question:

'Where did you put him?', which brings us to the next word in our series based on the  
numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5:

A word with three; what can it be?  
The word of 'see', has letters: three!  
And even when we see he saw,  
the word of saw – it has no more.

They said to him, 'Lord, come and see!'  
Yet when he did, he had no glee.  
This Jesus, he was deeply moved;  
his anger showed he disapproved!

He didn't like their lack of trust;  
when faced with death – we turn to dust.  
His anger also raged at death

which takes away our final breath.

## **Jesus saw. Jesus sees.**

Some of us might struggle with death and dying, but Jesus doesn't. He doesn't turn his eyes away from us or our loved ones, not even in times of death. We're never left alone to wallow in misery. In answer to all our speculations and doubt based on the questions of 'If', he gives us something certain and assuring.

He tells us he's there with us – seeing us, watching us, knowing us, and suffering with us intimately.

He sees your sins and forgives them through his suffering and death. He sees your tears which fill your eyes and fall down your faces. He sees your inner turmoil, grief, anger, and emptiness which you might try to hide from everyone else. He truly sees you, which means there's nothing and nowhere you can hide from him – either in guilt or shame, emptiness or anger, fear or grief. He truly sees each of you and your condition.

There's some comfort in the fact Jesus doesn't run away from dealing with sin or death. He walks right up to death, stares death in the eyes, and enters into death for you and me. It wouldn't be long before he would be treated shamefully with all the viciousness of sin, yet still forgives all those who repent and believe. He's our victorious champion who has defeated sin and death.

But what's often missed is there's a hint of anger in the word which is often translated as 'deeply moved'.

What could Jesus possibly be moved with anger about? Is he angry with death and the grief it causes us?

Is he angry when he sees our faith faltering in the face of death?

Well, even though Jesus was deeply moved by the experience of death, we move to the next word...

## **Wept**

Four letters do we now accept,  
and see them here when Jesus 'wept'.  
Another word we count to four;  
the word of 'dead' we won't ignore.

It moves us now to hear he cried.  
He stood at tomb with friend inside.  
That Jesus shed his tears of grief  
might comfort us, and grant relief.

The God who came to earth for us,  
has feelings too, which we'll discuss.

He's moved by love yet feels no shame  
when tears upon his face they came.

Have you ever stopped and considered this shortest text of the Bible and what it means for us?

Here is our God in human flesh...crying!

This is such a startling picture, because many people consider God to be somewhat removed from us as if he's impassive and devoid of emotion. Yet here we have an insight into how God feels. Firstly, Jesus may have been deeply moved with a hint of anger, and now he's so deeply moved he weeps!

In our western world which wants to hide from suffering, pain, and death, and often wants to avoid showing emotions of grief and emptiness, this is shocking!

Our God who created the universe with all its wonder and majesty...cries!

When you've been told big girls and boys don't cry, it seems God is giving you permission to cry. If tears are good enough for our God in human flesh, then why would we want to limit your own tears? Do you think you're better or stronger than God who is bold enough to cry in the face of grief? Do you think you have to show more control of your own emotions than our God who sees and suffers and cries and dies?

Here our God in human flesh cries outside the tomb of a friend. He's touched by the tragedy of death, yet this doesn't deter him in his own journey toward death for your forgiveness and salvation. The tears he sheds aren't a sign of defeat or despair. They're a sign he loves.

He loves each of you too, and he loves all of those who have gone before you and those who will follow you.

Death doesn't stop his love. After all, he's not a God of the dead, but a God of the living. Even though Lazarus has been dead for four days, his love and his word is more powerful than death.

It would be a nice picture to imagine him standing outside each of your graves, waiting to call the names of those he loves; to call the ones who died trusting him, which brings us to the final word...

A final word we'd like to hear;  
five letters in this word we'll cheer.

One word which helps us when we grieve:  
so Jesus prays that we 'believe'.  
This must be wrong, for if you count,  
this word has just the wrong amount!

This word it numbers five plus two!  
You might protest: 'This will not do!'

But other words for this 'believe'  
give us the strength when we do grieve:  
for 'faith' and 'trust' they number five;  
we trust in one who makes alive!

He prays for us to trust in him  
who cares for us – our soul and limb.  
When we believe, we say we trust  
in him who loves – for love he must.

Since the fall, death haunts us all;  
God climbed the cross and drank the gall.  
Our Saviour died to set us free  
so sin and death and snake may flee.

This God we trust when we believe  
that death has lost its power to thieve.  
Can you say two, three, four, and five,  
believing God will make alive?

Hear again what happened:

'Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" Jn 11:41b-43

And out came Lazarus, the man who was previously dead, to live and breathe once more.

The point of this account is so that you may believe, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Through faith, through trust, through believing in the words and work of Jesus, death isn't the end, which is why Jesus and the early Christians often talk about the dead as those who have 'fallen asleep'.

By faith you believe Jesus will one day call each of your names and you'll wake up from the sleep of death to find yourselves in his holy presence. Through faith you believe that the voice of our risen Lord Jesus will awaken your dead bodies so you might live forever in his holy presence. That will be a great and glorious day for all those who believe in Jesus!

But for now, like Jesus, you're allowed to grieve and mourn in the face of death. This doesn't mean death has won, because you believe Jesus has defeated death and gives you the gift of eternal life through faith.

After all, Jesus says, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in me, even though he dies, will live. Indeed, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe that?' Jn 11:25-26

Which means...

The peace of God he gives to you,  
which you don't fathom through and through.  
This peace, it guards you: mind and heart,  
so you and Christ will never part.

Amen.

**Pastor Stuart Kleinig**  
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**All Saints**  
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