

All Saints Sunday
The Reverend John H. Brock

5:30 p.m. Saturday, November 6, 2010
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Haggai 1:15b-2:9; Luke 20:27-38

Grace to you and Peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen

I want to speak some truth tonight. I am NOT doing this in order to gain any sympathy. I'm certainly not trying to upset or anger anyone. What I want to say tonight, what I would like to talk about is, I do so knowing that MOST of us, if not almost all of us, have had a similar kind of a loss, of a loved one who is gone too soon, people whom we have cared about who have died. And I say these things in part as someone who has to deal with the realities and the consequences of death on a frequent basis.

Our son, Noah, was born at 25 weeks, which is not quite long enough to survive outside his mother's womb. He was with us for 36 hours, but in the end his little body was simply not developed enough. And I held him until his heart stopped. Now I needed to tell you that, in order to tell you this next part, which is, that in the days that followed, friends, and parishioners, and well-meaning individuals came to talk with me, seeking to console me, and usually almost all began by saying, "I don't know what to say." And in that moment their truth spoke volumes. Because the fact of the matter is that none of us really know what to say when someone else is hurting. When someone else has lost a loved one, regardless of whether that death came suddenly and unexpectedly, or after a long lingering illness. Regardless if that person died after being in continual pain or simply faded away.

Many times I've had family members in my office as we began planning for a funeral and they say, "I've never done this before. I just don't know what to do." We live in a day, and fortunate enough to live in a country where most babies will live until adulthood; where most adults live far longer than most of their ancestors. And many of those adults never expected to live as long as they have. A lot of that has to do with good nutrition and the wonders of modern medicine. If we were to look at records from just one hundred years ago here in the U.S, we'd see that women died in childbirth quite frequently. That families of six or seven children only had two that survived until adults. Of life spans regularly only being forty or fifty years. And if we look at those facts, we can almost make it seem as though life is either not worth the effort or, "I'm going to do everything I can, as soon as I can, regardless of the consequences."

Yet, as Christians who live in the Lutheran Tradition, we are called to look at life in a different manner. We look at death in a different manner as well. We realize, we KNOW, that death is not the end. In baptism we are told: "By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection, you are set free from the power of sin and death and Christ raises us up to life inside." (ELW) We know therefore, that we are not alone. We do not live alone, we do not die alone, we are not alone in our faith. We have the witness of those who have gone before us, whether we knew them or not. We have

the witness of Christ in our lives, because of those who have gone before us whom we HAVE known. We have the witness of God in our lives as we gather in a place such as this, and our surrounded ourselves with friends and family, and sisters and brothers in Christ.

As we heard in our first reading tonight, the promise that God made to the people as they were coming out of Egypt. "I am with you; my spirit abides among you; do not fear." And again in the gospel lesson as Jesus encountered the Sadducees, telling them in no uncertain words, that not only IS there a resurrection; as children of God we are children of the God of the living, not the God of the dead.

We are reminded that our loved ones, be they sisters or brothers in Christ, be they aunts or uncles, cousins or siblings, parents, grandparents, coworkers, neighbors, all those who have gone before us, we continue to hold them in our hearts and they live in our thoughts. We have been promised by Christ that we shall all be joined together again. We are reminded tonight that we shall be joined together. We thank God for that hope and that promise, and we say to those whom we love, rest in God's peace until we meet again.

Amen.