

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Those Who Conquer

Gospel Lesson

Revelation 21:1-7 (NRSV)

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
⁴ 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.”

⁵ And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” ⁶ Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

Bible/Sermon Focus

Death is a reality for all living things and we humans are bound not only to that fate, but also to the deep grief and loss of losing each other to death.

We wake up in the morning and they are not there. We go to sleep and they are not there. And we know that we will not see them again until after our own death. Our lives are made up of those who came before us, who have spoken into our experiences. We are an amalgamation of the saints who have come before us. Honoring them is right and good and necessary.

All cultures have some version of the four same rituals: A naming and claiming ritual, a coming-of-age ritual, a marriage ritual, and a death ritual. For us (United Methodist) Christians we know those as baptism, confirmation, a service of holy marriage, and a service of death and resurrection. This last one, the service of death and resurrection, points to a truth that we hold dear to us: death, though *an* end, is not *the* end. Most cultures also believe in an afterlife and many of them acknowledge those who have come before us around this time of year.

Pastor Andy talked about *thin places* this week. The idea of thin places is rooted in a Celtic tradition. A thin place is where the veil between this world and the world to come is at its thinnest, where the two worlds come close to each other. In Mexico there is a similar belief: on

November 1st & 2nd those in our families who have died can come back and visit us. They call this celebration “Dia de los Muertos” or “Day of the Dead.”

We Christians also take this time to remember the saints that have gone before us. Our three-day celebration begins on October 31st (All Hallows Eve), continues on November 1st (All Saints Day), and ends on November 2nd (All Souls Day). We also celebrate the first Sunday in November as All Saints Sunday, a time to remember those who have died in our congregation over the last year.

As we grieve and celebrate the life of the saints who have walked before us, we cannot help but wonder about everlasting life with God. A place where death itself is defeated, where all suffering is conquered, and where life flourishes for an eternity.

And we are reminded that this is the fate of our universe. A place where the Kingdom of God will reign on Earth for an eternity, and we together will all sit at the Lord’s Table.

Discussion Questions

1. Who has been a saint in your life?
2. Do you have any rituals to remember the dead in your life (listening to songs, looking at pictures, setting an altar, visiting a grave, etc.)
3. In what way does communion connect you to the past, present, and future reign of God?
4. What do you think of the concept of “thin places?”
5. What do you want to be remembered for?

Prayer

Holy God, we thank you for the saints that have come before us. We thank you for your ever abiding presence in our lives and in our lives to come. Be with us in our grief and in our celebration of the lives that have made a difference to us. Fill us with the assurance of your everlasting love and the table that we will gather at together with the saints. Amen.

As heaven touches earth...the boundary between heaven and earth blurs and the result is a community in which no harm is done, where no tears are shed, and even death itself is defeated.