

He (Lazarus) Is Risen:
November 7, 2021

Today is the day we celebrate All Saints. **[1 All Saints]**
So naturally my mind goes toward...
All those beloved and holy people...
In my life...

Who have made the transition...
From the Church Militant...
To the Church Triumphant.

And I think of...
Wrigley's Double-mint Gum.

When I went to worship... as a child...
In our small town church...
In Sabula Iowa.

My family would take up a whole pew...
My mom and grandpa and grandma...
My brothers and sisters...
And whoever else...
Considered themselves...
To be part of our family that day.

And of course...
We would do all the Lutheran calisthenics...
Required by our liturgy...
Stand up... sit down... speak... sing...
Repeat.

But when it came time to settle down... **[2 Kid in Church]**
And listen to the pastor...
Drone on... about some topic...
The way pastors do...

Taking about something...
That a child like me...
Didn't really understand...
Or for that matter...
Didn't much care about...

My grandma... would reach into her massive purse.
And pull out a package of Wrigley's Double-mint gum...
Take one stick... and rip it in half...
She gave one half to me...
The other half to my younger sister...

And clearly... it was a bribe.
Hush money... if you will...

You know... it was a "sit still for 20 minutes" bribe.

It usually worked. I wasn't too squirmy.
Because I would play the the hymnals and the bibles...
I would open the books...
Make my eyes blurry...
And look at the lines between the words...
To see if they made a pattern.

You should try it sometime...
If you have never done it.

I would entertain myself...
Until it was time... to stand up again...
And sing our hearts out...
With the Hymn of the Day.

Garrison Keillor tells the same kind of story.
About his experience in church...
As a child.

He said when he went to church...
He was usually seated... between two large aunts.
And like most kids...
He would fidget and squirm.

He said he was like a dingy...
Tied between two docks.

When he became wiggly...
The large aunts would say...
Hush now... be still.

Garrison Keillor said...
I think death will be like that.
One day I'll wake up...
And say... I think I'll get up...

And death will say...
Hush now... be still.

This gospel lesson is NOT...
What we usually have...
For All Saints Day.

Typically it's the beatitudes...
From the gospel of St. Matthew...
Chapter 5...

You know...
Blessed are they...
The poor in spirit... theirs is the kingdom of God.

We're going to sing the song...
In just a couple minutes.

But this year... because of the common lectionary...
The guide of our scriptures choices...
Each week...

We have the story of Lazarus. **[3 Lazarus]**
The friend of Jesus...
Who got sick...
And died...
And was sealed in a tomb...
For four days.

Dead. As he could possibly be.

In the course of the story...
We have some really emotional situations...
The sisters of Lazarus...
Confront Jesus.

If you had been here...
Our brother would not have died.
Expressing their disappointment...
That Jesus let them down.

And we have... **[4 Jesus Wept]**
The most famous emotional moment...
In the life and ministry of Jesus...

Usually it's just two simple words.
Jesus stood outside the tomb...
Overwhelmed by the situation. And...
JESUS WEPT.

Then... you all know the rest of the story...
Jesus says... take the stone away...
But Lord it's been four days...
And because of the way things work...
We shouldn't open that tomb...

It will stink.

Then Jesus stands at the tomb.
Calls out in a loud voice...
Lazarus Come OUT...

And the man comes out of the tomb...
Alive but bound in cloth...
And Jesus says...
Unbind him...
Let him go!

It's such a great story.
But why?

Why did Jesus raise...
This particular man...
At this particular time...
From the dead?

Was it because he was such a great guy? **[4a Nice Guy]**
Well... we know... he was a friend of Jesus'.
Apparently Jesus liked him.
And his sisters... very much.

But that seems like...
A hallow motivation.
Everyone has friends...
Great guys are a dime a dozen...
And so are schmucks... by the way.

So... I don't think it was because...
Lazarus was nice or kind or had a great smile...
And a winning personality.
Maybe he did... maybe he didn't.
Who knows?

But my point is...
That's not a REASON to raise him...
From the dead.

It's All Saints Day... **[5 St. Lazarus]**
Was it because Lazarus was a saint?
I looked up St. Lazarus on the internet...
And Wikipedia actually made me laugh.

It said...
Lazarus had to flee Judea...
Because of the plots on his life...
You know... he was living proof of the power of Jesus...
And people wanted him dead and gone.

But then it goes on... to say he became a bishop...
In the area of Cyprus...
For thirty years...
And it says and I quote...

On his death bed... he was buried there...
For the second and last time.

Oh wikipedia... WE SHALL SEE.

But was Lazarus really a saint?
You know... good and holy...

Did the right thing all the time...
Never swore or spit...
Never acted out of hate or anger...

Never was a big mouth jerk...
Never did anything wrong.

I doubt it.
Have you EVER met anyone...
Who is sincerely 100% good and holy.

I have not.
That has not been...
My experience of the human race.

I mean... surely you know...
Most of us are pretty nice...
Most of us can be lovely.
Most of us can be gracious...
Most of the time.

But NONE OF US...
Are saints... according to the confused...
Misguided...
And unholy...
Definition of the word...
Held by this world.

NO ONE is perfect.
NO ONE is righteous.
NO ONE is right.
NO ONE is holy.
NO ONE has a halo that glows in the dark.

And if you think you are perfect in every way...
All of your words and actions...
Are good and holy.

You might want to go home...
And google the word...
Narcissism.
And humility.

So it's not that.

Maybe Jesus raised Lazarus... **[6 Club]**
From the dead...
Because he was part...
Of his group.

You know... membership has it's privileges.
Because of his personal connection...
Because he was in the inner circle of friends.

He was entitled to be raised from the dead...
And get a second chance.

Well... we could certainly twist that...
Into a good theological idea.
That our connection to Jesus...
Is what makes us worthy...
To be raised from the dead.
That's true.

BUT it's not true...
That our faith is a club...
That entitles us...
To special benefits.

The life of Christ...
Was for the sake of the world.
Everyone.
Everyone is welcome.
Everyone can be involved.
Everyone can make their home here.
In the name of Christ.

Our doors cannot be closed...
Based on our own ideas...
Or judgements...
Or prejudices.

Faith in Christ...
Is never ours to withhold.
It does not belong to us.

We are called to give away...
Our faith...
Our lives...
And everything we are...
In the name of Christ.

So the church...
CANNOT be a club.
Or an inner circle.
Or a group of friends...
Who have been magnanimously allowed...
To be a part of this elite holy group.

What I'm trying to say is...
The power of the resurrection...
The power of Jesus...
To bring life out of death...

Is not based... on us...
On what you know.
On what you have done.
On how great you think you are.

It's about who Jesus is. **[7 Greater Than]**

And who he is...
Is greater than...
Our individuals lives.

Who he is...
Is the one who unites us...
In a community of broken and hurting people...
Who are miraculously gathered together...
In love and grace.

Who he is...
Is the one who has the power...
To actually change our lives.
The way we think.
The way we act.

Who he is...
Is the only hope we have...
In the face of death.

Who he is...
Is the only One...
He is the only ONE...
HE IS THE ONLY ONE...
Who makes us holy in the sight of God.

And besides...
He gave us the answer...
Of WHY he raised Lazarus...
In the gospel lesson itself.

Jesus said... **[8 Glory]**
Did I not tell you...
If you believed...
You would see the glory of God?

So. What about you?
Do you believe in the power of Jesus?
Have you seen the glory of God?

How many of you...
Have been like Lazarus?

How many of you...
Have felt dead?
Have been dead?
Have been without hope?
Have been unable to help yourself?

How many of you...
Have been so filled with anger and hate...
And self-righteous indignation...
That you have been dead inside?

How many of you...
Have hit rock bottom...
With no where else to go?
Have had no hope.
No answers.
No strength.
No power inside of yourself?

Have any of you been there?

AND THEN...
How many of you...
Have heard the voice of Jesus call?

How many of you...
Have had him...
Stand outside...
The empty shell of your life...
Outside of your broken dreams...
Broken bodies...
Broken relationships...
Broken identities...

And had Jesus say...
To you... in that loud strong voice...
COME OUT.
COME OUT.
LIVE AGAIN.
UNBIND HIM.
UNBIND HER.
SET THEM FREE.

I guess... what I'm really asking is...
How many of you...
Have seen for yourself..
The glory of God...
In your own life?

Boy. I have.
Too many times.
I have been raised from the dead.
And have seen the glory of God...
At work in my life.

Ok. A quick quiz today.
Anyone who gets it right...
I'll give a Reeses peanut butter cup.
After worship.

Except staff members...
They might know.

Here's the question.

How many days are there...
Between Ash Wednesday...
And Easter Sunday?

40. Right? **[9 40 Days]**

Because it represents...
The amount of time...
Jesus was tempted by Satan...
In the desert.

It's supposed to be a season...
Of reflection...
And introspection...
Resulting in a solemn evaluation...
Of our own sin...
And repentance.

Like Jesus in the desert.
We stop and think about our lives.

Some churches even bury the Alleluias...
We aren't supposed to say...
Alleluia... or praise God...
During that dark dramatic season...

But no! 40 is not the right answer...
There are actually 46 days...
Between Ash Wednesday...
And Easter Sunday.

Because in the season of Lent...
There are 6 weeks... with six Sundays...
But the Sundays are NOT counted.
As part of the desert season.

They are considered outside of Lent...
Because they are the Lord's Day.
The day of the resurrection.
The day of hope and life and love... **[10 Easter]**

EVERY SABBATH DAY,
REGARDLESS OF WHAT DAY YOU GO TO WORSHIP,
REGARDLESS OF SEASON OF THE CHURCH YEAR,
EVERY SABBATH DAY,
IS A CELEBRATION OF THE RESURRECTION

Every sabbath...
We gather together...
To celebrate...

The day...
That God brought life out of death,.

Hope out of despair.
And Jesus out of the grave.

AND has opened up... a way...
Of life and hope and love...
For us...

So that means...
This is Easter Sunday too.

Jesus has been raised from the dead.
Lazarus has been raised from the dead.
You have been raised from the dead.
I have been raised from the dead.

So come out of your grave.
Be unbound.
Live again.

So listen.
I have not gone mad...
I know it's not Easter Sunday...
It's just that it's All Saints...
And I don't want to forget.

So let's try something this morning...
Ready?

He is Risen!
He is Risen Indeed!
Alleluia.

Thanks be to God.
Amen.