

Sermon: November 4, 2018

All Saints Sunday

"The Path"

The gospel this morning is an incredible story ... Jesus raising Lazarus. But it's not until I step back and reflect ... it's only then that I discover the real message and power of this story.

Yes, it's about Lazarus --- Jesus' good friend. Jesus gets there after Lazarus dies ... and he is criticized for being late. (Has this ever happened to you?) Lazarus' sister Mary says to Jesus ---- "If you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Yes, Jesus was late. He didn't do enough. Is that you? ... is that me?

Have you ever been too late? Ever feel like you aren't doing enough? Ever just wanted to cry and weep because you have lost someone you love?

I wonder if Jesus ... when he gets there ... just wants some time NOT to be the "son of God." I just want to be Jesus ---- not the messiah or the miracle-worker or the one who "fixes" everything. Let me just be a friend, who is human and cries because I have lost someone special.

Do you ever get tired? You just want to be human and accepted for who you are ... and not always trying to be what others want you to be. I see all the names on the bulletin insert today ... all the names on the bricks out back. I think of the folks who are not on the list. I think of you ... all those you love, and who love you back. I wonder sometimes: have I done enough? did I say "I love you" enough? Was I "too late"???

Jesus goes to the tomb where Lazarus' body has been laid. The stone is rolled away, and Jesus calls out: "LAZARUS - COME OUT!!" My friend ... my buddy --- come out!!

I realize now why this story has lasted so long. Yes, Lazarus is Lazarus ... and Jesus is Jesus. But Lazarus ----- that's you!! it's me!! How often we are tempted to climb into the tomb. We walk the other way ... we are afraid ... afraid of being late ... afraid we aren't good enough ... that our "vote doesn't matter."

And when Lazarus does come out ---- HE IS ALL BOUND-UP. And what does Jesus say???

UN-BIND HIM. LET HIM GO.

Lazarus --- you are free. You are alive. You don't have to hide anymore@!!

Jesus says this to us. Don, Bob ... Fred, Gertrude ... Annette ---- whoever you are:

You don't have to hide. All that "stuff" binding you up ... whatever it is ...

Not feeling good about yourself. The mistakes you've made. Some of the wrong turns. The guilt.

The jealousy. Your disabilities.

LET IT GO!@!! You are too important to stay in whatever tomb that's keeping you away!!

You know? ... we are all "saints." This is why we are called ALL SAINTS LUTHEREAN CHURCH.

It's all of us together ----- one person, one moment, one step at a time.

We all have our "tombs." Maybe we're late or feel like we haven't done enough ... and we get "all bound up." Then we need to hear the invitation ----- to come out ... to be who we are ... to do the best we can.

The words of the song we are singing today: *"I love to tell the story of unseen things above ... of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love ..."* Speaking of stories ...

They are counting the offering after worship last Sunday. Tom is a quiet guy ... but at 12:30 last Sunday ... he seems a little extra quiet. His wife Debbie looks at him ---- "Isn't it time you told Don about what happened??" A few tears well-up in Tom's eyes.

Tom likes to run. Never on Friday. He and Debbie so enjoy the horse-trails in the Palos Forest Preserve. I do, too. Different paths ... out there by yourself ... you feel like you are in "another world" ---- surrounded by the beauty of God's creation. Tom's work schedule changed ... so, on Friday, September 14 ... he's running the trails. He makes the turn ... and comes up on a man, lying face down on the trail. He's not moving. Tom doesn't know if he's alive or dead.

Tom doesn't run with his cell phone. It's nice ... once-in-awhile ... to be "cell phone free." Tom finds the man's cell phone next to him. It's not locked ... so, he calls 911. Not easy describing to the Fire Department where you are in a forest preserve. Tom begins doing something he's never had to do before ---- CPR. 20 minutes: COMPRESS. COMPRESS. COMPRESS. Maybe the longest 20 minutes of Tom's life. Finally the ambulance and fire truck arrive ... on the path ... and they move this gentleman into the ambulance ... Tom has no idea of he is going to survive. Maybe his journey is already over.

When Tom gets home ... he calls a friend, who is on the staff of Palos Hospital. He tells his story ----- is there any way you can find out whether this man is ok?? Later his doctor friend calls back. Tom, he survived ... he will probably need rehab ... but he's gonna make it. YOU SAVED HIS LIFE.

Last week ... the man's wife calls Tom. With all the privacy issues ... it takes time to "connect" ... but "connect" they did. What does she say to a man who saved her husband's life?? He's only 44. They have 3 young kids. He will be in rehab for a while ... somehow ... he will be ok. No wonder Tom was so quiet last Sunday. A life-changing encounter. And, yes ----- the "love bucket" made a visit to their home.

Random moments.

Left turns. Right turns. A day off.

Tombs and forest preserves. A man's life is saved.

3 young kids die in a school bus accident in Indiana. Adolf and Pete --- journeys with ALS.

A child is born, and lives only a few months.

A lady at Marion Village comes to a worship service ---- 102 years old.

Random? God's plan??

I don't know. Maybe someday we will know.

But I do know this: I ... you ... we can't take any moment, any act of goodness, any person, any journey ---- for granted. In all this ----- God's hand is there. Not "controlling" us or "controlling" life ... but HOLDING US in the palm of his gentle hand.

Tom is not here today ... but we are.

Wherever we are ... whoever we are ... I DON'T WANT TO BE BOUND UP.

We need to "come out" ... and LIVE EACH MOMENT.

Don Borling

All Saints Lutheran Church

13350 S. LaGrange Road Orland Park, IL 60462

November 4, 2018

www.allsaintsjoy.com allsaintsjoy@sbcglobal.net 708-448-2939