

Sermon Notes – November 3, 2024 All Saints Sunday
The Holy Gospel of St. John 11: 32-44
Peace Lutheran Church
“Raised From the Dead”

Every human who has experienced much of life has hoped and dreamed of a time when tears and grief would not be so common as breathing and laughter. Some suffering that Isaiah witnessed prompted his vision of a glorious feast at which God would put an end to sorrow and pain. Centuries later, the *Hasidim* - an order of zealously observant Jews that arose during the era of Hellenistic persecution that saw many like old Eleazer and the seven brothers tortured to death (2 Maccabees 6-7) - despaired of God's vindicating the righteous in this life. They began teaching a resurrection of reward for “saints” (*hasidim*) and an afterlife of punishment for their tormentors. Later, Pharisees continued this teaching, although Sadducees and others rejected it.

Early Christians proclaimed the Good News not only of Jesus' own resurrection, but also of the promise of resurrection and eternal life for all who believed in Him (John 11: 23-27) and were baptized (1 Cor. 15). Today's reading from Revelation tells of a new Jerusalem in a whole new creation where the faithful will rejoice in an eternal wedding feast and death will be no more.

Today -for now - we give thanks for the lives of all the “saints” who have gone before us, and we commend them, and ourselves, to God's hands as the whole creation awaits His new creation and the wedding feast commencing. We still grieve, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thes. 4: 13).

Today - for now - death still visits, and we weep. Moreover, the lectionary for this day leaves us with one eye closed. All the Biblical visions divide us into the saved and the damned. Below the feast and flowing wine atop Isaiah's holy mountain, the Moabites, our hated enemies, swim desperately in our dung pit (Isa. 25: 10-12). Somewhere outside the feast described in Revelation 21, “the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars” will burn in a sulfurous lake of fire (Rev. 21: 8).

In our polarized age, we all have lists of who belongs where in the great comeuppance. But John's gospel offers a clue concerning what it means to be a "saint" - a follower of Jesus gone on to their final reward - as Jesus raised Lazarus only to take him along on the road to Jerusalem and likely to another death (John 12: 9-10).

Here's a radical thought. Followers of Jesus - "saints" - don't shun their enemies, but comfort them, even give up their lives for themselves. Today - for now - we pray for the time our Father will wipe away the tears of His people!