

## WELCOME 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – All Saints' Sunday '22 C

John 16:16-32 & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Today is All Saints' Sunday, when the church traditionally gives thanks for those saints from among us who have entered into their eternal rest through Christ. A day of rejoicing in the triumph they enjoy now that awaits us when our day arrives...**Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

**As we move into this week...**

**We** are one, but we are many

And from all the lands on earth we come...

It's a song, but it's also reality. From the dream-time...prison ship...daughter of a digger or recent arrival from some far flung part of the globe. We emerge from different backgrounds & divergent cultures. We vary by educational attainment desire & capacity. We are socially & economically diverse. Our tastes in books, movies, music & spiritual devotion are a mix. But all of us end up at **the** same place eventually:

That's not morbid or gloomy or a tip of the hat to Halloween last week...it's what unites & at times defines us...not so much our eventual dying, but the grief that even an image can summon. Grief is how we respond to loss...loved ones, family, friend, ways of living & relating...lost opportunities, sense of security or self, our identity trust belief...But not all grief is the same...

**Now** dear brothers & sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

For some grief is unending...it has nowhere to go...no hope to point it toward joy? JOY?

**So** you have sorrow now, but I will see you again;  
then you will rejoice, & no one can rob you of that joy.

Not wishful thinking of some far off land of clouds & harps, but united so closely & inseparably to Jesus by his death & resurrection that in the grip of grief we are held by unshakable comfort & peace and live toward a certain future & renewed joy.

Today...We'll talk...For some grief is unending...it has nowhere to go...no hope to point it toward joy...But Jesus crucified, risen & ruling...to trust in him gives a certain future and a renewed joy where we experience the power of the Cross & the life of Christ in all we do...Let's pray...

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Lord Jesus, we so often remember your faithful followers who move mountains, by earthly standards, but please help us to remember those who fulfill their missional calling behind the scenes. We have been blessed by such a long history of the church, that many go unremembered. Teach us from the lives of those who didn't gain the spotlight. Let us glean their humility and servitude. You humbled yourself, even to the most shameful death and many to this day follow that example. Make us more like these saints, and more like you, every day. Let it be in us according to your word...Jesus in your Name... Amen.*

*Let's hear God's word...*

## FAITH CHAT:

1. Complete the sentence:  
"No-one ever told me grief felt so like \_\_\_\_\_"
2. How is your relationship with Christ transforming that in you?

*According to Crosswalk.com, "The Christian festival of All Saints Day comes from a conviction that there is a spiritual connection between those in Heaven and on Earth. In some traditions, the day honours all those who have passed on to the Kingdom of Heaven. All Saints Day relates to giving God earnest gratitude for the lives and deaths of his saints, remembering those who were well-known and not."*

## ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY '22 C – TABLE TALK: GRIEF

13 years ago this week I flew to the US for my father's funeral. He'd not been well for a long time & he'd had a rough run w/ faltering mental capacity for even longer. He & my mother celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on October 2<sup>nd</sup> & less than a month later death parted them...like they'd promised...it was the only thing that did.

The plane ride over was interesting. The lady in the seat next to me seemed to stop breathing when I honestly answered her question; "Is this trip business or pleasure?" "Well...neither really. Funeral. My Dad." But she got it...she had done the same not long b/4. And there we were...united in common grief...Her experience had been more sudden...less expected...So she described a world completely upended ...life no longer like it used to be. Her family had lost what was familiar & routine. She described feeling overwhelmed, powerless, lost & confused. We understand that...

Similar conversation not long ago w/ 2 different friends who have recently stood alongside family graves & the question: Why? Why them? Why didn't God do something? Why didn't God intervene? Weren't so much angry as hurt...but anger isn't uncommon...nor is it necessarily wrong. GP – "air our grievances b/4 him."

I've been reading Jeremiah over the last few weeks...He prophesies in stark chilling language the coming exile God's people face on account of their unfaithfulness idolatry & rebellion against what God has clearly stated as his will for them. He grieves openly/passionately for the slaughter, destruction, devastation & captivity to come. He certainly isn't alone in that. One of the Psalms from that **time** Ps 137:

*Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat & wept as we thought of Jerusalem.*

*We threw away our harps, hanging them on the branches of willow trees.*

*For our captors demanded a song from us.*

*Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn...*

*But how can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a PAGAN land?*

Not just locationally displaced, but spiritually...Maybe they no longer knew what to believe about God, life, or themselves. When everything in ruins, it's ALL called into question. Who are we now? Where can we place our trust? How do we *move on*? Grief...how we respond to loss forces us to ask questions that may have no good or satisfying answers. They were hoping it was all a dream & they'd wake up to find it fixed...all better...like it used to be was supposed to be. I'd wager some in-house squabbling broke out...who was to blame...who shoulda oughta & didn't...Others probably sank deep into their wounds & losses ready to give up...take me now. When your heart's broken & deep sorrow takes over there is often nothing left but a primal groan...tears & wailing. Grief is exhausting...physically, emotionally, & spiritually.

As Jesus works to prepare his followers for his arrest trial gruesome crucifixion & death he knows that sense of displacement & primal guttural pain fear & grieving will seize them like the jaws of a lion...**I** tell you the truth, you will weep & mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve...YOU. WILL. GRIEVE. The inescapable reality of the world's cruelty & ultimate resort to evil will buckle their knees...it does ours...It would multiply for them because they would flee in terror & deny in shame. He would be brutalized & die alone...how could they sing joyful songs of his presence & power...tell the stories of his mighty works & words when they scattered like rabbits b/4 the harvester...Cut & run at the 1<sup>st</sup> sign of danger?

**I** tell you the truth, you will weep & mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy...So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, & no one can rob you of that joy. Always the promise...the commitment that suffering sorrow anguish death grief pain & tears will not stand forever...do not have the final word...will one day be silenced stilled erased obliterated gone forever.

The only thing that transforms grief to joy is the presence of the risen Jesus. Nothing else touches grief like the risen reigning nail-scarred Jesus. **NB Lk 24**...the guys had *HEARD* the women's recount of the empty tomb & angelic proclamation of Christ's resurrection. They *HEARD* the others say they saw the empty tomb...but that hadn't punctured their darkness. Grief persisted. But when *THEIR EYES* were opened to him, in the dead of night they rush back to Jerusalem & discover Peter has seen Jesus as well. The only thing that transforms grief to joy is the presence of the risen Jesus. Nothing else penetrates the gloom w/ light. Nothing else breaches the walls of sadness...nothing else breaks the chains of misery except the risen Jesus who arrives granting joy that cannot be stolen. We are not immune, but we are assured...

I hear the question...John, I hate to be a party pooper...but I haven't seen Jesus ever...living or dead...What about me? What about my grief? my dying? my joy? **Now**, dear brothers & sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died & was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. Paul writes to exactly that question, to people who received the good news of Jesus' life/death/resurrection/rule for us that unites us to him & restores us to the Father but who were expectantly looking for Christ's return in glory...any...day...now...And as more of them fell to death that expectancy began to give way to gnawing impatient worry...as the world continued its ruthless evil & degradation...Have we believed in vain? Is our faith folly? Are we just wishing blindly against inevitable sorrow & unavoidable disappointment?

Are we just whistling past the graveyard? - Al Kolbe was a funeral director for Goetz Funeral Home in Seguin, TX, where Leonie I lived for my 1<sup>st</sup> call as a pastor. Al was a pretty rough character. Former football player...big beefy jovial man...at times inappropriately. But he was at heart a kind compassionate faithful Christian who carried his prayer book to every funeral in his jacket pocket...Why? Al Kolbe despised secular burials. He hated, in his words, "See someone buried w/ no more regard than the family pet." AND...Sometimes after one of those sorts of remembrance ceremonies, where someone would talk a "plan" & caterpillars turning into butterflies or little worms in a pond growing into dragonflies he would be asked if there wasn't something else to be said...And that big goose would pull out his prayer book & read 1 Th 4 - Jn 16 - Rom 8 - Ps 23 & pray the *Our Father* before he lowered the coffin into the ground. He knew sometimes grief had nowhere to go...no hope to point it toward joy & w/o that it would be unending unceasing un-tended un-mended...fake rituals are phony hope. So he would do his best to share what he held dear & who held him close...

**God** has given both his promise & his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong & trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. - Heb 6:18-20

Not wishful thinking of some far off land of clouds & harps, but united so closely & inseparably to Jesus by his death & resurrection that in the grip of grief we are held by unshakable comfort & peace and live toward a certain future & renewed joy. Jesus' life death resurrection & rule for us inseparably unites us to him, restores us to the Father & assures us that on the other side of death grief sorrow sadness or tragedy we are now & will be then forever in the very presence of Jesus in the hands of the Father. Paul would assure the Romans...**We** can rejoice, too, when we run into problems & trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, & character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. This hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. - Rom 5:3-5 Hope locked on Jesus is a certain future & renewed joy because God, by raising Jesus from the dead, has united our lives to Christ...anchored us in the most secure way to life w/ him forever...hope that will not disappoint or fail to yield joy.

**For** since we believe that Jesus died & was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. We tell you this directly from the Lord... For some grief is unending...it has nowhere to go...no hope to point it toward joy... But Jesus crucified, risen & ruling...to trust in him gives a

certain future & a renewed joy where we experience the power of the Cross & the life of Christ in all we do. Always the promise...the commitment that we are destined to be in the presence of Christ sharing the Father's delight as loved...dearly loved children.

Last week we took hold of the assurance that the cross kills me to the life *OF* this world & raises me to living the life of Jesus *IN* this world. The cross links me to him eternally such that all that belongs to Christ now is mine/yours...To trust, cling to, hope in Jesus gives a certain future & a renewed joy. To the church in Corinth Paul would write...**We** capture every thought making them obedient to Christ. - 2 Cor 10:5B Every thought...every sorrow...every tear...every sadness frustration longing disappointment...grievance...obedient to Christ offered aired <sup>b/4</sup> him is swallowed up by his triumph over the grave...We are not immune, but we are assured...

**You** will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy...So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, & no one can rob you of that joy. Always the promise...the commitment that suffering sorrow anguish death grief pain & tears will not stand forever...do not have the final word...will one day be silenced stilled erased obliterated gone forever...replaced by inexhaustible absolute joy.

**TAKE IT HOME** - A living hope in Christ enables us to have joy in times of sorrow.

What is one thing you've heard today that brings assurance or joy to you that you can share with others going through a dark time?

*Let's pray... Lord Jesus, you took the death we deserved in place of the life of glory that was yours eternally. You joined us in the place of desolation having stepped down from the place of absolute joy. Now we share your sonship in the love of the Father. Now we are united with you forever because you took us into your death & resurrection and nothing can separate us from you or snatch us from the Father's hand. Move in us by your Spirit so that every day we demonstrate life in you, hope in you, joy in nothing but you. Let it be in us according to your word...Jesus in your Name... Amen.*