

*32When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

*33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" 38Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." 40Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."*

Today is a day to remember the really special people that have died. All Saints began as an all martyrs remembrance – remembering the more than 400,000 men and women and children that were killed because they confessed their allegiance to Jesus. The word martyr means witness – in their choosing death rather than to take the easy road and deny Christ they were witnesses to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord – he comes first before nation and ethnic group or even family – Jesus is Lord they proclaimed in their dying. Special people.

Over time the special people that were remembered were those that proclaimed Jesus is Lord through their living. Saints they were called, St. Paul, St. Mary, St. Gregory, St. Augustine – some were people of great knowledge and understanding, some were those that were part of Jesus' earthly life, some were known for great goodness or how the power of God was at work through them in miracles. Special people. Saints. To this day this is how the Roman Catholic Church thinks of saints – those that have shown the love and power of God in extraordinary ways. All Saints.

This fall during the confirmation parent class I asked the question, "Who are the special people of faith in your life?" The answers I received were not about pastors or popes or priests –no, I heard about mothers and grandfathers and Sunday School teachers and uncles, about grandmothers and neighbors and school friends and church friends.

The Holy ones that I heard about were common people, everyday people that depended on Jesus - people that loved Jesus - people that made time for Jesus.

Saints. When Paul wrote his letter to the church in Corinth he addressed it to those who are made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is called to be a saint. Paul is writing about you – called to be a saint - you – a special person of faith – a holy one.

Today on this All Saints Sunday we remember loved ones who have died. Some of them are great people of faith, some of them were not. Some of them were very close to Jesus all their life and others not. Yet every one of them that is now in Jesus care has been washed clean by him – given all of Jesus goodness and holiness in exchange for giving Jesus all of their sins and failings and weakness. All the death that belonged to them Jesus took upon himself and all the life that is in Jesus is God's gift to them. More than anything else now, this is what we want for them. It does not matter now whether they were once rich or poor, wise or foolish, respected or dishonored – if they are in Jesus' care now every dream has come true and if not, nothing that they may have had in this life will make up for what they have lost now. Everything depends on Jesus now – everything.

Our faith or lack of faith will not change that. The dead man Lazarus had no faith – he had only the love of Jesus for him to wake him out of death. So it will be with all of us in our dying. We will not argue our way into the kingdom of God – not our words but his voice calling us out of death and into life is all that will matter. Everything depends on Jesus.

Even now.

In this life.

Already.

As I have told you in recent weeks I promised to speak about Stewardship in the sermon the past two weeks, and today and next Sunday. One way to think of our giving is to see it as a way to try out the truth that everything

depends on Jesus. Will he care for you? Will he provide for you? Will he bring you through? Soldiers thrown into a life or death battle find out. They pray as they never have before and they learn what Jesus can provide.

Those that battle life-threatening disease find out as well. They find what Jesus is able to do for them in ways that those who are wrapped in a blanket of health do not.

And those that give – letting go of some of the security that money can provide often get a greater taste of trusting in Jesus.

Some of those with the greatest faith are those that learned to trust Jesus in war, or in the battle of life-threatening disease or in risking giving. They are changed.

When the confirmation parents spoke of the ones in their lives that were closest to Jesus we did some wondering whether we will be remembered in the say way. What a precious inheritance to leave.