

November 4, 2018 Ephesians 4:4-6, *The Message Bible*
Romans 8:35,37-39

Even though this is the fourth year we have lifted up loved ones who have died, it has not been a part of our faith tradition, so some words of clarification. November 1st has traditionally been celebrated as All Saints Day, a time to remember and lift up all the named saints of the Christian church. November 2nd has been traditionally celebrated as All Soul's Day, when all those who have died in the past year are remembered and lifted up. We Protestants believe either we are all saints (and sinners) or there is no such thing. So, we do not venerate named saints, but do see all followers of Jesus Christ, that is to say, all who seek to share God's love, we see as saints which is why, on this All Saints Day Sunday, we are remembering and lifting up our loved ones who have died, those who loved us and whom we loved, especially those who have died this year.

I have chosen two scripture passages to give focus to this particular service. The first, from Ephesians, is a reminder that we have been called to walk together in faith, and that our communal walk unites us in God through our "one Master, one faith, one baptism, one God and Parent of all." This unity offers us support and comfort in times of loss, especially when we consciously seek to "stay together, both outwardly and inwardly."

To go along with this, someone shared a statement we me that appeared on a sign in front of the First Baptist

Church in America: "We are all just walking each other home."

The passage from Romans is a foundational passage for my own faith. This passage tells me that the power of love is the most powerful force in the universe. It is more powerful than death, because not even death can kill love.

While the body might die, while the one we love might be physically absent from our lives, the love we have shared lives on. In and through love our loved one lives on in us and all around us, as do we in them. How? God only knows. But I do believe in the truth of the resurrection; "Love lived never dies" is the truth of the resurrection.

So we gather together in community to remember; to remember the loss that weighs so heavily on our hearts and to remember the love that keeps us connected, one to another, the love from which we can never be separated, the love which never dies.

In this time of remembrance, as we recognize that such a gathering incarnates the saying, "We are all just walking each other home." may the Oneness that permeates "everything [we] are and think and do" touch our hearts, ease our grief, and hold us in the love from which we can never be separated from. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC To Where You Are Vaughn Bryner

ALL SAINTS DAY LITANY

L: God, we remember those who have gone before us;

C: We lament their passing,

L: And honor their legacy.

C: We give thanks for all we have learned from them.

L: We remember: those who shared your love faithfully,

C: We follow their example.

L: Those who made mistakes along the way,

C: We learn from their experience.

L: Those who made progress for peace,

C: We continue their work.

L: Those who lived simply and quietly,

C: We are enlightened by them.

L: Those who gained honor and distinction without pride,

C: We are humbled by them.

L: They have finished their work on earth,

C: And it lives on,

L: Continuing to reverberate in our lives still today,

C: Just as your steadfast love lives on.

L: May the peace of Christ continue to inspire us

C: To good works, humility, simplicity and peacemaking,

L: Just as all those who have gone before us were inspired

C: To live in grace and love.

All: Amen.

TIME OF REMEMBRANCE

Bring forward photos, light candles, and name names

Pastoral Prayer:

O God, our rock, our fortress and our might, across the ages you have sent us more witnesses than we could recognize, more help than we could seek, and more of yourself than we have been able to love. We thank you especially for the saints of our faith: those who have freed us to worship you, those who have revived our faith and spoken your calling to us, those who have taught us about the past that we might be prepared for the future, and those who have been Christ to us, listening, loving, teaching, and serving us.

Teach us to recognize the sources of wisdom, holiness, and love that you have sent us, whether we find them in the Bible, in history books, in our family stories, or next to us in the pew. Open to us the real, fleshy, complicated, and spirit-filled lives of your saints, so that we might see just enough of ourselves in them to realize that you call us too.

When you, the Oneness “who rules over all, works through all, and is present in all”, when you seem to be distant from our needs, our pain, and our joy, give us the eyes of faith to see your saints, who are all around us, and therefore so are you. For the gift of their witness and your Word, for care from your hands through theirs, we thank you.

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, who lives here among your saints, sending the Holy Spirit to shape us all as your servants, O God.

SERVICE OF COMMUNION