

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



November 7, 2021

SOULS

Honoring all who came before

by Drew Downs

When we gather for our midweek service on Thursday, we are often given to honoring the life of someone the church lifts up as part of "the Great Cloud of Witnesses". Which is another way to refer to those people we frequently call saints.

Our collection of saints includes all sorts of people. People we have deep respect for, people we believe exemplify the deepest faith, and some who were far more

problematic. Each week, we participate in remembering people of all stripes. Which means some feel less "holy" than others.

I love celebrating All Souls (November 2) because it reminds me that the project isn't just about honoring the brightest and best; the star pupils earlier Christians told us are awesome. It is all of us. Including that annoying neighbor. That kid down the street. And yes, even me.

ORDINARY TIME

Fall 2021

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

It's fall, isn't it? I know that's a strange question to be asking, but I sometimes do wonder what season it is.

I'd like to say it is because I am so immersed in the church calendar, that the liturgical seasons are paramount. But that's only partially true.



Growing up in northern Michigan, school started after Labor Day, right as the leaves started to change. September *felt* like fall. And since it was routine to have snow on Halloween, winter was always around the corner.

The year we moved to Georgia, it was October. And eighty degrees well into December. There were no weather cues to tell us that Christmas was only a couple of weeks away.

Fall brings us back inside. At least for those of us who have homes. It brings out sweatshirts and coats. At least for those who have more than one.

The weather reminds us that our weekly coffee hour will move inside for now. It has been fun to gather in this new way this summer and fall and I hope we continue to do this in the future!

It also reminds us that there are those in our community that don't have the gift of safety and stability that comes from housing, clothing, and regular food. Our Mission and Outreach Team is collecting once again for the Point in Time Count in January. Let us show gratitude, generosity, and faithfulness in this season.

Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

Fall 2021

FOR SUNDAY

All Saints and All Souls Observed

November 7, 2021

Collect

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.

Amen.

Reading

From John 11:32-44

"Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go.""

Reflection

We get in John 11 one of the most compelling stories in the gospels. Two sisters, Mary and Martha, come to Jesus, hoping he can save their brother, *his friend*, Lazarus.

When he doesn't get there in time, the sisters blame Jesus for not protecting him from death. But Jesus isn't focused on what he was unable to do. He was focused on what he could do now: restore Lazarus to life.

I love this story because we know that feeling. We know what it is like to blame someone, Jesus or God even, for something they could have done something about.

ORDINARY TIME 2021

It is also very familiar to watch them get mad at Jesus for taking his sweet time to get there, *even though he **couldn't** get there in time if he wanted to.* Jesus was still days away when Lazarus only had hours.

That emotion that stems from anguish is intoxicating.

When we learn that a loved one has a potentially-fatal disease or begins the descent into dementia, we as the ones who love and care for them begin to experience their death long before it arrives. We begin to mourn their passing, even as they are next to us, very much alive. This is the oddest of griefs, but one all of us will experience.

Jesus, however, offers a different sort of release from this. Not a release from death itself, or from feeling pain, but from the extremeness of it. And more importantly, the confusion of it.

Jesus encourages us to live - to engage with the moment we're in. Which means, in times of growth and happiness, we push ourselves toward gratitude and generosity. And in times of grief, we also move toward living out the moment. Not to hide from it or avoid the feelings that may feel so overwhelming, but to let them in.

The story ends with the most stunning image of the dead being brought back to life. But it doesn't end with the transformation. It ends with an act of restoration and wholeness. Because Lazarus is wrapped up and dressed for *death*, not *life*. He needs the wrappings removed *by those who love him*.

"Unbind him, and let him go."

We know Jesus's words to Mary and Martha are words for us, too. For the living in the midst of grief. So we all might truly live.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG