

All Saints Day

November 1st is All Saints Sunday. For many Christians, it is a Sunday where we remember our brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone before us. Christians who celebrate All Saints Day believe that there is a special bond between Christians who have died and are in heaven, which theologians call the "Church triumphant," and those of us who are still living, which scholars refer to as the, "Church militant." Faith and trust in this bond was so beautifully illustrated for me by the words of a young grandson reflecting on the death of his beloved grandfather. He said: "I wish that "Opa" had taken his cell phone with him, then he could talk to us and tell us what it's like."

This lad truly believed that his "Opa" was in heaven with Jesus. His innocent belief is supported by Jesus' words in John's Gospel: *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26) As Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins, a repentant criminal, who suffered and died alongside Jesus, made this faith-filled request: *"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* Jesus answered him, *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* (Luke 23:42-43)

That young lad's yearning gave me pause to reflect and ponder. What if my deceased mother and father had smuggled a cell phone along on their trip to glory? What if the cell phone had reception or service in heaven? I know that they would call me if they could. I would love to talk to them. What would they say? I believe they would say:

"Believe Ed! Heaven is real. Jesus is real. He really is with you. He really walks among you. He is really with you until the end of your age, until the end of this world's time and he is revealed to all humankind."

"Believe you can be really free of the grief and regret caused by the mistakes, lies and trespasses of your past. So when your past sins bubble up and take over your mind, believe that is not God vexing or harassing you, it is your sinful self and the devil plotting to rob your life of joy, peace and hope. Believe that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for those sins. Believe that as a result you are free from your sins, they are paid in full."

"Believe you can really be free from the hurts of your past. Believe that God can give you the grace and peace to forgive those who have hurt you. Believe that God can heal your wounds and heal your mind."

"Believe that God wants you to be different. God wants you to shed His light in the world by speaking God's Word. Always remember that God's Word points an accusing finger at those who hear it so that they come to repentance, but through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God reaches out His hand in love, friendship and forgiveness. Believe God embraces us with His Word and Sacraments. Believe that God wants you to be salt. God wants you to live by His Word. He wants you to be slow to anger and quick to forgive. He wants you to be kind and generous."

"God wants you to see that this life is not all there is. In the end, all your accomplishments will be forgotten, all your prizes and treasures will end up in the landfill or recycled. God wants you to see that our love of money and possessions does not lead to peace, hope and joy. It is the love of others that pays dividends. Our love for one another transcends death. We still love you and you still love us! God loves you. He wants you to love him back. God's love not only transcends death, it destroys it and gives life afterwards. Read the Bible! God's Word will change you. God's words created the universe. Remember, universe means, "one word." One word, God's Word created all we can see and what we can't see. God's Word revealed in the Bible will create faith in you."

"We love you. Tell the family we called and we love them. Have hope! We will all be together again."

You can hear God's Word and be in Christ's presence at Grace Lutheran on Sunday mornings at 9:00 (Contemporary worship with praise band), and 10:30 (Traditional worship with choir &/or special music), and 6:30PM Healing Service the last Wednesday of each month.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek

Grace Lutheran Church