

All Souls

None are Lost

Lamentations 3:17-26, 31-33 & John 6:37-40

The death of a person we love, the death of one who has, in some way touched our lives, leaves us grieving. We know that our lives will never be the same again. For some of us our grief is still very raw – for others it has softened. Yet we each know, in our own way, what it is to grieve, and we may echo the words of the ancient poet who penned our first reading, “my soul is bereft of peace; and is bowed down within me.”

We often speak of death as a loss, for it's true – we've lost their physical presence from our lives. They aren't there when we wake up, or when we call, or pick up the phone. Death has taken them. Yet, in other ways, we haven't lost them. The memories that we treasure testify to that – memories that may bring sadness, but also delight; that cause tears to come to our eyes, but also a smile to our face. There may be memories that we struggle with, but also many others for which we give thanks. These memories tell us that those we remember today aren't lost to us – they remain a part of our lives, held within our love. They still have a presence in our lives. As Henri Nouwen once said, ‘Remembering the dead is choosing their ongoing companionship.’ So, today, we give thanks for all that they mean to us – affirming that our lives are richer for having known them – for having loved them and been loved by them.

Death is a loss, and yet it's not. John gave us Jesus' promise, that he would lose nothing of all that God had given him. It may seem that those who have died are lost to us, but Jesus would say, they are not lost to me. Death is the last event of this life, but it does not have the last word. “I should lose nothing that the Father has given me ... and I will raise them up on the last day.” Every life is so valued by God that God will not let go of us.

While parted from us by death, those we remember today are still one with us in Christ. They remain with us as companions on our journey – a part of the community we hold in our hearts. Parents and grandparents, partners and spouses, children and grandchildren, family members, friends and mates, fellow parishioners, and neighbours – they remain united with us in the love of God.

As we remember, we affirm that our dead are not lost, either to us, or to God, for they are held in God's loving embrace. And so, we pray, that they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

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