



MARTIN LUTHER LUTHERAN CHURCH

All Saints Sunday + November 6, 2011

Today is All Saints Sunday, when we remember all those who have died in the faith, all those loved ones who we loved but are no longer with, all those whose funerals we have attended.

If you've been to a few funerals, you've probably had the experience of hearing the clergyman or family member go on and on about the deceased, detailing all the great things they did, listing countless moments of kindness, expressing what a perfect person they were, how they never even uttered a curse word, to the point that you were tempted to walk up front, open up the casket, and see if you were at the right funeral.

When a person dies, talk about them becomes one-dimensional: if they were loved, they become perfect; if they did some wrong, they become the anti-Christ. It seems that after a person dies, our memory makes them one-dimensional, and we forget about the bad sides of a basically good person, and we forget about the goodness revealed in even the most horrid soul.

Certainly, no one is perfect. Just so certainly, no one is perfectly evil. We are all a mix. We are all 100% sinners who are a disappointment to God. But we are also 100% saints, forgiven and cleansed by Jesus.

Being a combination of saint and sinner, assures that we are all going to disappoint each other. Family and friends will disappoint. Co-workers and celebrities will disappoint. Politicians and pastors will disappoint. It's part of life.

Since we all do wrong, and God does not kill us when we do, every part of this world has wrong in it. It has violence and illness, aging and suffering, mourning and death. Even where goodness shines, evil is present. As Martin Luther once put it, "Where God builds a church, there the devil puts up a chapel."

But the Christian conviction is that all of our wrong, all of the world's wrong, all of the powers of Satan, have been shown to be temporary at the cross.

There Jesus gives hope for a new creation.

We have a baptism this morning, and I wish I could promise Jagger that because of his baptism he would never encounter pain, hardship, or loss. But I can't. All I can promise is that on the other side of eternity, Jesus offers a new creation.

There, illness is going to be gone. Handicap ramps are going to be gone. All those commercials with starving children are going to be gone. Gone will be wrecks and wars, muggings and murders, victims of violence. Gone will be false allegations and true

scandals, broken hearts and fixed games, lukewarm relationships and ice-cold bosses. All of that will pass, and the only thing remaining will be survivors.

They will survive not because of all the nice things said at their funeral, not because he was a descent chap or because she cooked a good meal, but only because of what Jesus did on the cross for them.

“See Christ here, on the Cross! See His wounds, see His torn hands, see how the King of Glory is crowned with thorns! Do you know what Love is? Here is Love, Here on this Cross, here is Love, suffering these nails, these thorns, that scourge loaded with lead, smashed to pieces, bleeding to death because of people that will never know Him, and never think of Him and will never remember His Sacrifice. Learn from Him how to love God and how to love men! Learn of this Cross, this Love, how to give your life away to Him.” (Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, p. 354)

For while Jesus' body turned black and blue, while the sweat and blood ran, while the tears and cries came forth, while the crowd laughed and laughed, then and there he prayed for you, and yearned that through his filth, you would be washed clean; through his agony, you would know relief, through his misery, you would know joy, through his suffering, you would become a saint.

Amen.