

All Saints' Sunday      2016  
Matthew 5:1-12

**“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED.”**

On Valentine’s Day of 1884, Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his dairy these words, “The light has gone out of my life.” He wrote those words on February 14, 1884, because his 25-year-old wife died in his arms, just 26 hours after giving birth to their daughter. Incredibly, just hours, he had said a final farewell to his mother, Martha, as she died in the same house on that same day.

I’m guessing you’re thinking about now, “Thanks for the history lesson, Pastor.” I share the words of Theodore Roosevelt with you this morning because those words are your words. You could write those words as your very own. You know death and its sting. You’ve mourned. You’ve mourned mom or dad, your spouse, a brother or sister, perhaps even a child or grandchild. And, it is right that you mourn.

Your mourning expresses the great truth – the truth that death is real and death is awful. Death is God’s grand judgement and wrath against your sin, that you were born in sin, you sinned against God and your neighbor, you sin by what you say, you sin by what you don’t say, you sin in what you do, and you sin by what you don’t do. And the wages of that sin is death. And when death comes calling, there is not one thing you can do about it. It just comes.

And when it comes, whether it’s your death or someone else’s, it is truly right that you mourn. Death is not a time for bravery; it is not a time for heroics, a time to keep a stiff upper lip. It’s a time to acknowledge that the judgement of God against sin has come.

Of course, when you are mourning death, friends will come, trying to comfort you, with words like this, “We all have to go some time.” “You’ll be fine. No one can grieve forever. The sun will come up in the morning and life will go on.” How about this lie of the devil, “Death is just a natural part of life.” Really? Have you read your Bible lately? The 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Genesis tells us that God created the perfect home for us. The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis tells us that God created mankind to be the crown of creation, subdue His creation, and live in that creation, enjoying the work of god’s creating hand, forever and ever without end. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis tells us the lie of Satan led our first parents into sin and death came because of that sin.

They will even come with stupid, sappy words like this, “Heaven just got another angel.” Well, I remind you that the Bible teaches that you are no angel, and you are never going to be an angel.

Neighbors will come with words of comfort like this, not spoken so much to comfort you, but that the person speaking those words is trying to convince themselves that death is not as dreadful as it seems. But, death is dreadful. It is awful. And, it is very real. And, comfort does not come through sappy words of bad theology. Comfort comes through Jesus Christ and His words. And His words are this, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

You see, Jesus knows how real and awful death is. He knows what it’s like to mourn. He mourned for His friend Lazarus, weeping real tears at the graveside of His beloved friend. And the Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus is unwilling to let you sit there and fool yourself when it comes to death. Jesus is not going to let you sit there, and try to pull yourself up by

your bootstraps, grit your teeth, and get over it. Jesus knows that doesn't work.

Jesus has come to comfort all who mourn. And He does it in this way:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself like partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery (He 2:14-15).

Jesus did that when He was born of the Virgin Mary. When He became a man, He took on your flesh and blood. He came to live for you, in your place. And He came to pay for all your sins. He did that when He went to the cross of Calvary, carrying all your sin, all the sin of all the world, the sins of all people of all times and all places. He gave His life into death for those sins. And in doing that, He destroyed the works of the devil.

And, He also destroyed death. The 3<sup>rd</sup> day, He rose again from the dead, to give you victory over sin and death, life and immortality. And He does it when you are baptized into His death and resurrection. In your baptism, you receive Christ's own victory over sin, and death and the grave to be your own victory.

And, oh what comfort the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives, especially when death comes calling. Jesus comes to you with comfort, speaking words like this,

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26).

Jesus also says,

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have

told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (Jn 14:1-3).

That is the blessed comfort of All Saints’. We believe with certain hope that those who have died with faith in Christ Jesus have gone to the home of heaven that Christ has prepared for them. They are now living before the throne of God and before the Lamb Christ. They are the ones clothed in white robes. They are holding palm branches in their hands. And they rest from their labors. This is the true and certain comfort of All Saints’.

But, there is even more to it than that. You’ve mourned someone. Whether their death was 60 years ago, 6 months or 6 days ago, there are those days and times when you are as sad as if it happened a half hour ago, and the tears flow and you mourn.

But in your mourning, the Word of God comes so that you do not mourn as those who have no hope.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord (1 Th 4:14-17).

The day is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will raise the dead. And on that day, all who have died in the faith will rise glorious and victorious. And the cry will go out, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Death is swallowed up in victory “(1 Cor 15).

And those perishable bodies will be raised from the dust of the earth in which they were laid to rest. Those same bodies that have died will be raised, glorious, without sin, imperishable.

And, on that day, with crowns upon our heads, white robes upon our bodies, palm branches in our hands, we shall stand before the throne of God

and serve Him day and night and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living waters, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev 7).

That is the comfort that Jesus gives, for He says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."