



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + November 1, 2020 AD + **All Saints Sunday***

This Week: Loss, Grief, and Hope

Prayer brings you to the most sympathetic listener possible.

As we read in Holy Scripture, our Lord Jesus sympathizes with all our weaknesses, having experienced them Himself (Hebrews 4:15). For this very reason He became flesh, suffered, and died for us, that “He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God” (Hebrews 2:17). He even wept outside the tomb of His friend, Lazarus (John 11:35), trembled in agony at the thought of His own death (Luke 22:44), and witnessed the sorrow of His mother as He, dying on the cross, gave her up to the care of His beloved disciple (John 19:26). Through the cross, our Lord experienced both sides of the grave.

He is no stranger to loss and grief, and therefore, He is no stranger to you.

Each person reading these words bears a special weight of grief, a history of loss that has shaped your faith and character. We bring that sorrow to our devotion. Not only do we know that God holds and keeps what we cannot—He transcends the boundaries set by our loss, because He is risen from the dead—but we also know that He sees our loss as we cannot, in light of His gracious care and purpose for us. Devotion may therefore serve as a means by which we commend our losses to God, pour out our grief to Him, and find ourselves renewed in hope.

About the Cover Art

Using the dress and backgrounds of a city in the 1500s, this altar piece by Lucas Cranach tells the Bible story of Jesus raising the son of the widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-17). By setting it within the colors and architecture of his time, Cranach promises to his viewers that what Jesus did for that widow’s son, He will do for them, as well. Notice how Jesus, dressed in copper, and the resurrected young man, dressed in white and sitting atop a golden bier, contrast so sharply with the solemn black of the others in the funeral procession. Even at a funeral, Jesus is our bright, shining light and life.

Remembering the Faithful Departed

“We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). The dead are not dead to Jesus, and God has created the Church to see things as Jesus sees them. Therefore, the dead are not dead to the Church, either. We remember those who die in the faith of Christ because doing so confesses the truth: they are not dead but alive in the One who really lives.

So how do we remember the faithful departed? Photographs, memories, mementos—of course all these things. But even more: Baptism and Holy Communion. For over a millennium, the Church has lit candles to picture the light and life of Christ given at Baptism. We therefore commemorate the dead by lighting a candle for them. Also, if the dead are with Christ, and Christ is with us so intimately at His Supper, then guess who else is there? All our beloved departed saints! We go there, to the altar, to remember and be with those who have died in the faith before us.

Daily Readings for the Week of Nov. 8 (Pentecost 23)

S Micah 1:1-9 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 Matthew 16:13-20	Th Micah 5:1-4, 10-15 Revelation 9:1-12 Luke 10:25-37
M Micah 2:1-13 Revelation 7:1-8 Luke 9:51-62	F Micah 6:1-8 Revelation 9:13-21 Luke 10:38-42
T Micah 3:1-8 Revelation 7:9-17 Luke 10:1-16	Sa Micah 7:1-7 Revelation 10:1-11 Luke 11:1-13
W Micah 3:9—4:5 Revelation 8:1-13 Luke 10:17-24	

These readings correspond to pages 1084-1117 in Vol. IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Devotion and Funerals

At its most basic level, every funeral is a *procession*, a journey from home to grave and back again. Joining and completing that procession is the purpose of funerals in the Church. To explain:

Death changes our homes, and especially the homes of the one who has died. It alters our circles of fellowship and visits our living spaces with grief. How shall our homes be whole again? What shall brook the divide between what was and what now is? One answer is the funeral procession.

Though we no longer hold visitations in the home (not a bad thing to revive, perhaps!), it is there, at the home of the beloved departed, that the funeral really begins. There is where the fabric of life is torn as the loved one leaves for the last time, either to die or having already died.

So wherever the public funeral begins, we all leave our homes and go there for one purpose: to mend that torn fabric by walking to the grave with each other and saying, “Christ is risen, and this body also shall rise.” Having thus stared down the grave and insulted death, we carry the healing power of those words with us back to our homes. The Word of God heals the breach.

What does devotion look like around a funeral? First and foremost, it remains *devotion to Christ*, our God. Specifically, it revolves around this prayer: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.” We pray at funerals, as we pray at the end of our lives and the end of the Church Year, for Christ to come and raise the dead.

Second, it’s *remembrance of Baptism*. In Baptism, we die with Christ (Rom. 6:1-5) so that we may live with Him. Funerals become a time to proclaim that truth for both the beloved departed and all who gather. Here is why we set out the Paschal candle at funerals and cover the casket with white. We are preaching that the life and innocence of Christ still shine and cover us in death. We devote ourselves to Christ in His earthly presence with us, trusting that the dead are ever present to Him.