

I know many, if not most of you, will say that I'm too young to say this, but I'm going to say it anyway, my memory is not always my best friend. Now, ask me to quote you obscure song lyrics from a song I randomly heard that one time at that one place, yeah I can probably do it without thinking, but then there's stuff that feels like it should be there and it tends to just scatter. I feel this particularly acutely when it comes to reading. I feel it especially acutely when I meet someone like Carol who can quote books verbatim off the top of her head. I feel it especially acutely when former classmates will reflect on Facebook about that thing one of our professors said in some random class that they still remember. My brain hears that stuff and it's like, "Nope. I can't do that. Thanks." It's especially frustrating because you all know how much I love reading and my books, so to not have that information right at my fingertips is annoying.

This just happened to me last week as my sister was reading the book I picked out for her to read this year from my favorites list and she was asking me all of these questions about my thoughts and I'm like...I do not remember some of this stuff. It's one of my favorite books of all time, and I've got nothing in terms of remembering details and nuance. So in an effort to waylay this obnoxious habit, I've started a journal. Now, I have always kept a reading journal with my commentary on how I liked it after I have

read it, but this one is different. This is a journal that I keep while I'm reading, and I jot down quotes and lines that stick out to me as I go along. I put the page number down so if I want to look back in the book I can, but otherwise I have a handy dandy compact notebook where all my quotes are to comb through.

I was doing this this week as I was thinking about today and All Saints' and what it all means for each of us, and I came across several of these quotes that I am thus grateful that I wrote down. The first one comes from a book that quietly and quite good humoredly dealt with grief and how we cope when we lose the person we love. It said this: "I am less me. I left part of myself with you. I don't know what it was, but I felt it leave my body the last time I held your hand." The second comes from a Stephen King novel, go figure, but sometimes there is profound depth in the midst of the paranormal. King writes: "Sometimes nothing is right, I guess...sometimes you just have to do what you can and try to live with it." Admittedly, they aren't the most upbeat of quotes, but we'll get to the others in a bit. For now, we sit with these, because at the end of the day, no matter who we are, where we have been, what we have, we all find a level-playing field when it comes to grief, to loss, and the need for hope. Something Jesus in all of his divine humanity intimately knew.

Our gospel today should sound fairly familiar, but slightly off-kilter to our ears. We hear these words of blessing and we anticipate Matthew's version of the Beatitudes while Jesus is preaching from the mountain, and instead what we get is Luke's version, where Jesus is preaching from the plain, a quite literal level-playing field. Luke's version speaks deeply to exactly what Luke's gospel is all about, Jesus coming to dwell amongst God's people in the real, nitty, gritty junk of real life. Jesus coming to address the physical and emotional needs of God's people, along with the spiritual. Matthew's version of this only deals with the spiritual, but Luke centers himself intently on the physical, the biting things we feel to our core when we experience the hard of the world. I ardently believe that both Matthew and Luke represent real things that Jesus said, because Jesus recognized the crowds he was surrounded by and their needs in that moment, and being human himself knew the truth that while sometimes our spiritual needs need to be addressed first and foremost, there are also times when if your physical needs aren't being met, the spiritual ones are hard to focus on.

I imagine Jesus hearing someone say something like the men who spoke in my books, speaking the intimate truth that sometimes loss of a loved one feels like a loss of part of us, that sometimes things aren't ok and we have no idea how to just move forward. Into those moments, those

moments that some of us might be feeling fresh or renewed today as we remember all of our beloved saints, Jesus comes with words of promise, of hope, and of the blessed reality that God goes way beyond what we would deem fair when it comes to walking with us, God's creation.

From the moment Jesus stepped foot in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed he had come to bring good news to the poor and let the captives go free, he has made it clear that he is all about ushering in God's upside-down kingdom. All of those things that we feel characterize the world we live in are flipped upside down when the reign of God is given freedom in the world to run rampant. For us, today, the most vital piece of this upside-down kingdom is this, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." Jesus preaches directly into the heart of our need. He doesn't come with false words of optimism, clichés, and platitudes. He comes with the promise of the role reversals in the kingdom of God which he has come to help usher in. He looks at the people around him, some of whom were most likely grieving, mourning, even weeping right then, and he says, yes, right now, things aren't ok, things aren't ok, and I see that, God sees that, and we walk with you through that pain and that grief, and we bring the promise that in the kingdom which we are striving towards, there will be no more need for tears, for grief, for mourning, because all of those things will be irrelevant.

Jesus doesn't even need to say the word resurrection here for us to know what he's referencing, it is the assured promise that our state of grief now, our tears now are not the permanent, world-defining thing, but it also comes with the deep recognition that the grief, the tears of now are real. They don't just magically disappear. They have to be held and acknowledged and lovingly felt, and eventually the laughter will come. In the kingdom of God, they won't need to exist, but in this not yet of God's kingdom they are real and they are seen. That is the space that not only Jesus holds for us today, but the space we hold for ourselves and for each other. That is why we're here today, to say we need the promises of God and we need to feel our grief, and trust that hope will be the red thread from one thing to the next.

Jesus knew that he couldn't magically just wipe away the tears, the pain, the loss from the lives standing right in front of him, but what he could do was give them a promise, give them hope, and that is the exact same thing that he does for us today. There is no one word, one phrase fix for the loss of our loved ones, not only this year, but all those years that we remember. The pain of that, the loss of that is real, and yet the promise remains, the gospel remains. Our mourning shall be turned to dancing, our tears to laughter, death to life. God will turn this world upside-down and the

gift of eternal life and resurrection will be for all of God's saints. That is the ultimate hope of today, that this feeling is not the feeling which will remain permanent. Life eternal, life together will be is permanent, and we have the gift and ability to hold both of those things. We can hold that things are hard now and that things will ultimately rest in the care of God and that the world will turn upside-down. Grief and crying and pain will be no more and all that will be left is love, hope, and the wonder of reunion with those whom we love so very much.

Today we hold both things. We look around our windowsills and we remember and we mourn, and we look at one another and hold one another in peace and we hope. Today we hold that life is a gift even when it comes with the hardness of the world. Today we hold that God is the tender love that gets us through the hard. Today we hold to the third quote that stuck out to me from my journal, "I want you to really live. To live is the rarest of things. Most people merely exist." Today we rejoice that our saints lived and loved us. Today we give thanks that we are here to live and to love them in memory. Today we give thanks that to live eternally is the greatest of all things. **AMEN!!!**