

“Living in Hope”

Sunday November 9, 2025

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Pentecost 22

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ! Amen. When my son Austin was in 9th grade and about 13 or 14 years old, I stopped into his room before bed to say goodnight, and he was crying. “Austin, what’s wrong?” And with big tears and a bit of a sob, he said, “I don’t know where I’m gonna go.” And my heart sank. I asked him, “do you mean...after you die?” That’s exactly what he meant. He had been watching a movie called “This Is the End,” and he was beginning his first year of high school, and he was very stressed out. He was searching for some concrete answers.

Now, I was not ordained at the time and I thought to myself, “you’d better get this one right. Surely, you’ve learned something from several years of seminary study.” So I answered him as best as I could, and I prayed that my answer would calm him down and comfort his soul. I chose my words very carefully. I spoke to him the other day and asked if he remembered that time. He did. My husband even remembered that Austin was pretty upset for several weeks. We both kept the conversation going with Austin, and he was able to make the transition to high school. Apparently, our explanations were helpful.

Today’s Scripture lessons wrestle with the same general question that Austin asked. What will happen to us when we die? The Sadducees wanted to know what would happen, because they did not believe in resurrection. So they asked Jesus, or maybe they challenged him. We are asking this question in our congregation this week as we prepare to say goodbye to Fran Kreiser tomorrow. Will Fran be safe wherever he is going? Is he free of pain? Has he been reunited with his own parents and his loved ones? What will his relationships look like on the other side? And what about our loved ones who have passed away?

Not knowing the answers to these and many similar questions may cause us a great deal of anxiety, but I want to reassure you that Fran, and all of the Saints that have gone before him, are resting in Jesus’ loving arms. They are at peace and they are with God. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John: *I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.* Scripture promises over and over that our God is a God of mercy and forgiveness. God promises that we are all children of God, meaning that we are children of the resurrection. To God, all of us are alive. Even though we have no idea what eternal life will be like, we can trust that God will make it right and God will take care of us in the process. God promises that we will live eternally with God long after our earthly life ends.

We are coming to the end of the liturgical year this month. Maybe you can feel it in our readings. Last week was All Saints Sunday, a day on which we acknowledge our human mortality. This week our Scripture lessons talk about Resurrection and how our living God is with us both in this life and the next. Hopefully you hear this as good news – even though the news of Fran’s death is still very raw. Next week’s readings will talk about nation rising against nation and the end of time. These are all very heavy topics that ask very challenging questions about God and our mortal existence.

But then the last Sunday of November will be Christ the King Sunday, the day on which we proclaim that Jesus will outlast darkness and destruction at the end of time, and then he will reign forever. And this is where we find our hope. We have a God who will outlast the darkness. We have a God who conquers all evil, and a God who tells us not to worry. Our God will renew the earth and all those who live and move and have their being.

Jesus tells us, in the Gospel of John—which by the way we will read tomorrow at Fran’s funeral—we know the way to the place where Jesus is going. Jesus declares, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life*. Jesus is the way to God and to eternal life. That is our faith and that is the hope that we cling to. That is the faith that will save us.

In our Old Testament reading, poor Job laments his lot in life. He is angry at God for the tragedy that has befallen him. And yet he knows that God is sovereign in the world. He knows that despite crushing sorrow and suffering, our God is the God of life. And yet he refuses to curse God. He knows that it is God who will give him strength until his family and livelihood are restored, and his losses are redeemed. If you think about it, this is also the message of Easter. Job is able to proclaim that God is sovereign and in control, and eventually he is able to see God at work in his own situation.

I have heard Job’s story over and over in my ministry. People have endured unspeakable tragedy and despite their suffering, many have been able to continue to have faith in God. I think back to a stranger at the soup sale a few years ago who told me how he lost his daughter to a car accident. But he ended his story with a statement similar to this one: I know that my Redeemer lives. He told me that even though his grief has never gone away, he refuses to curse the Lord. He knows that it was through God’s grace and mercy that he was able to keep on living. He is still grateful for the years he spent with his daughter. She remains a part of his memory and part of his soul.

The good news for us today is our Redeemer lives. Jesus is alive and well and touching each and every one of our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit. On this Sunday that some theologians call “the Little Easter,” let us remember the message of Easter Sunday...the grave could not hold Jesus and God promises to raise us to eternal life. What will that look like? We don’t know. But we do know that the cross of Christ is empty and that death will not have the final word in our lives. **Amen.**