**First Reading Isaiah 25:6-9**

*Isaiah sees a vision of the end of days, when God will gather all people on God’s holy mountain and will prepare for them a rich feast. At this banquet God will wipe the tears from all eyes. And there will be no more sorrow, for God will destroy death itself.*

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. 7 And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

**Psalm 24**

1 The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world and those who dwell therein. 2 For the Lord has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. 3 Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord, and who may stand in God’s holy place? 4 Those of innocent hands and purity of heart, who do not swear on God’s being, nor do they pledge by what is false. 5 They shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of their salvation. 6 Such is the generation of those who seek you, O Lord, of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob. 7 Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! 9 Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? Truly, the Lord of hosts is the King of glory.

**Second Reading Revelation 21:1-6a**

*Here is a vision of the new heaven and new earth in which God resides fully with God’s people so that mourning, despair, and pain have been eradicated. These renewing words from the God who spans all of time are trustworthy and true.*

1 I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice

from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” 5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also, he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6a Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

**Gospel John 11:32-44**

*Through the raising of Lazarus, Jesus offers the world a vision of the life to come, when death and weeping will be no more.*

32 When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” 38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” 40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” 43 When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

**Sermon**

 Today is All Saints Day. It is one of those big picture days when we take a step back and see a fuller picture of what we are part of as baptized people of faith. On the day in which we were baptized, we became saints. That might surprise you if you think of a saint at someone who lived a holy life, a kind of Super Christian among regular Christians. But in the Lutheran faith, we are at the same time both saint and sinner. So, when we are baptized, we become

saints because of the grace and love of God that saves us through the cross of Christ. God makes us saints when God claims us as God’s children through baptism. That is a promise of a relationship that is eternal, which means it lasts beyond this life into the next.

 That is why we can all be considered saints. All those who are baptized are considered saints because our lives are covered by the love and grace of God through the cross of Christ. We share this existence with all those who have specific feast days and commemorations on our Church calendar. And we share this with all those of faith who we remember today who have died in the past year. God holds us all together in that mystical body of Christ that is not limited by our sin nor by the span of our lives.

 Each year on All Saints Sunday, we hear this same Prayer of the Day that speaks of God knitting us together in one communion, or we could say community, in the mystical body of Jesus Christ our Lord. That image of the mystical body of Jesus catches my attention every year. But this year in particular, I’ve found that the gospel passage assigned for today connects very well with the theme of the day and with this idea of the mystical body of Jesus. First, we should understand what we mean by mystical. According to definitions available to us, the ones I find most fitting refer either to something that is mysterious or relating to something supernatural, that is, beyond what we consider natural or normal. Everything about God, and about Jesus, for that matter, is mysterious, is beyond what we would consider normal.

 From today’s gospel passage from John 11, I’d like to draw your attention to the most mystical, mysterious part of the story. And it’s probably not what you would think. I’d like to draw your attention to what is considered the shortest verse in the Bible, at least in Greek. In this NRSV translation, it has been drawn out a bit. It is verse 35. In the King James it is translated, “Jesus wept,” while here in front of us it says, “Jesus began to weep.” Just to keep us all on the same page, this happens because Jesus’ friend Lazarus had died and was buried in a tomb. The larger context is that Jesus has a close relationship with these siblings Martha, Mary and Lazarus. When Lazarus falls ill, the sisters send word to Jesus hoping that he will come and heal Lazarus. But Jesus does not come until after Lazarus has died. Both sisters question why Jesus didn’t come sooner.

 The figure of Jesus standing there weeping at his friend’s tomb is mystifying. We are in the gospel of John this week particularly for the festival of All Saints. From the beginning of

John’s gospel, the running theme is, “and the Word became flesh and lived [or dwelt] among us.” The Word is referring to Jesus but, in the bigger picture, as John says in chapter 1, “the Word is God.” So, God became flesh and lived among us in Jesus. Keeping that in mind, now we look upon the weeping Jesus and it is mystifying. Why is he weeping, crying? He had the power to prevent Lazarus from dying. And we know he has the power to raise him to life. So why is Jesus crying?

 Various scholars have their ideas. But the one that resonates with the idea of the Word become flesh, just as we are flesh, is that, in that moment, Jesus felt the pain of humanity when someone we love dies. Does he know that he can bring Lazarus back to life? Of course he does. But even that resurrection doesn’t last forever. Part of living the human life is dying. And that loss is hard on all of us. In that moment, Jesus felt that. And that should mean the world to us.

 Through Christ, the God of all creation can sit with us in our pain and suffering. We don’t experience pain and suffering alone. Jesus wept. Jesus weeps, joining us in our grief. The grief and pain of God’s saints is a holy time to recognize the loss of a life given by God. It is time that needs to be taken, full of feelings that need to be felt. If we feel them today, if we break down today, it is okay, no apologies necessary. Grief is holy and we see that in this passage in the One who knows how the story ends yet also knows what it is to be human.

 Over the years, at this church, we have experienced some difficult losses. And in conversations with one another we have agreed that we don’t know how people deal with grief and loss when they don’t have faith. Because of what happens when Jesus raises Lazarus…because of what Jesus does through is cross…because Jesus is the resurrection and the life, we certainly do not grieve as those who have no hope. We have hope in the life to come. But that does not mean we don’t still grieve. That is part of this in-between experience of knowing we are knit together by Christ into this mystical body with those who have died and yet continuing to live THIS life without the ones we’ve grown to love.

 It is amazing and beautiful that Christ is the resurrection and the life who welcomes us from this life into the next. It is also amazing and beautiful that Jesus the resurrection and the life does something as human as weeping with his friends. Christ reminds us how holy our human life and death are in the eyes of God. His tears, his cross, his presence make our lives

mysterious as we are sinners who are also saints, as we grieve death and yet have hope. We have encouragement as we look to the lives of the saints whose lives have also been steeped in the holiness of God. It is Christ who keeps us connected with them; it is Christ who sits with us in our most human struggles, who makes our lives holy. Christ has created for us a life full of mystery, a life that is more than what we see in front of us. We are part of a bigger picture and yet our every moment is full of meaning and the holiness of God. Amen.