

**Wesley United Methodist Church
November 1, 2020**

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12
All Saints' Day

I was talking with a friend recently who told me about a time when his son Matt was very young. The child's grandparents were visiting from out of town. At some point Grandpa and Matt were talking about how the next time they saw each other Matt would have grown a great deal. Grandpa wondered how he would recognize Matt. Matt responded, "I will say my name."

I loved the simple but profound insight of this young child and the power of knowing someone's name. Today, when we often have the lower half of our faces covered, it can be hard to recognize someone, and sometimes we need to say our name so that the other person will recognize who we are.

In other years, many people would have come to the altar to light candles and to say the names of people that they want to remember, people who were and are important in their lives even though they are no longer physically with us. Today, Deborah and I lit those candles on your behalf, and I'm hoping that while we were doing so, you said the names of the people you want to remember today.

A couple of days ago, I read "When we lose someone we love, we must learn not to live without them, but to live with the love they left behind."ⁱ I liked the sentiment of that statement and I particularly appreciated the thought of living with the love they left behind. Because it is, indeed, their love that continues to live on in us.

I will remind us, however, that we have never truly lost those we love. The story is told of a "little girl whose baby brother had just died asking her mother where the baby had gone. 'To be with Jesus,' replied the mother. A few days later, talking with a friend, the mother said, 'I am so grieved to have lost my baby.' The little girl heard her, and remembering what she had told her asked, 'Mother, is a thing lost when you know where it is?' 'No, of course not.' 'Well, then, how can Baby be lost when he has gone to be with Jesus?' Her mother never forgot this. It was the truth."ⁱⁱ

Those whom we have loved, who have died, are not lost; we believe that they are living eternally with the God who loves them and loves each of us. As long as we

learn to live with the love they left behind, as long as we can still say their name, they are still with us in very important ways.

On All Saints' Day, we speak of the great cloud of witnesses, of those who are part of our lives even though no longer with us physically. We speak of those who have made a difference in our lives. We speak of those who have nurtured us and cared for us in our lives and who have nurtured us in our faith.

Every time we celebrate communion, we are also in some way united with that great cloud of witnesses, the communion of saints, those who are no longer with us. Some of them may have passed on to eternal life; others may continue to serve God in other places. We are in some mysterious way, united with those whose spirits are somehow still part of us and part of this sanctuary.

Today, when there are only two of us here in the sanctuary, when we celebrate communion, we celebrate as if each of you were here with us, and in some very real way you are. We cannot see you. You will see this service from your homes, but somehow, in God's mystery, we are still connected, we are still present with each other. We are still gathered around the table and so are those who are no longer with us in this earthly world, but who still live in our hearts; who still live in our lives, and whose names we still say.

Let us pray:

Our loving God, on this day when we gather to worship you, we remember those who are no longer with us physically, but who are still very much a part of our lives. For all that they have given us to make us what we are, for the part of them which lives and grows in each of us and for their lives that in your love will never end we give you thanks. Continue to draw us closer together even when physically separated, help us to be faithfully serve each other and in doing so to serve you, and help us to know the peace and joy which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Source unknown. Found on Facebook with the tag @Peaceful mind peaceful life.

ⁱⁱ Hewett, James S. Editor. *Illustrations Unlimited* #18, p.144 Tyndale House Publishers, c. 1988

ⁱⁱⁱ Part of this prayer is adapted from a prayer in the Service for Committal in the UM Book of Worship p. 157