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## *For All the Saints: The Peace that Passes All Understanding*

**A sermon by Dean Sam Candler**  
**All Saints Sunday – Year B**

*“The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

I know those words are often the closing words of the priest, as he or she blesses us after services. But I think of them throughout this particular service, All Saints Sunday, when we remember the saints, all the saints, of God.

“The peace of God which passes all understanding.”

Apparently, my grandfather used to say that, whenever his daughter (my mother) asked him what he wanted for Christmas. “What do you want for Christmas,” asked my mother? He would say, “All I want is the peace of God that passes all understanding.”

His answer always marveled me, as it may have marveled my mother. She heard it throughout her childhood. And those words are so good for children, for us children, no matter how old we are. Peace and Understanding. Even children know what peace is. No fighting. No worry. No anxiety. That deep sense of steadiness, that it’s going to be okay.

And even children know what understanding is, and they know that there are some things that we just do not understand. We do not understand why we are not supposed to eat all our Halloween candy at once. We do not understand why the drive to our relative’s house takes so long. And, then, we do not understand how sunrises and sunsets can be so glorious. And we do not understand why it is that we love someone. And we do not understand why some people die. There are some bad things we don’t understand, but there are also some beautiful things that we do not understand.

“Peace that passes all understanding” is one of the deepest phrases in the Bible. And so, it is one of the phrases I use most often when I try to offer comfort in times of death.

Most of us here today have been close to death. Many of us are here this afternoon because someone we love died in the past year, or some time ago. We remember how difficult it was to describe that experience of death. Maybe the death was gentle and expected. Those deaths can, indeed, be peaceful. But maybe it wasn’t. Maybe someone died unexpectedly, or far too young, or way too tragically.

I realize that words don’t always give us peace. Words can fall short. Words can even irritate us, upset us, and even anger us. Especially when people die. That’s why it is beautiful to have other things, besides words, in times of grief. It is good to have flowers around at times of death. It is good to have music, like this music from Fauré today. It is good to have food. Because, when words get in the way of peace, sometimes actions and sounds and incarnations can be better.

Still, words can also be helpful. I use these words fairly often. My prayer for people, for everyone, who has experienced death, is that we have the peace that passes all understanding. I don’t understand it, and you don’t understand it, but may God grant us that peace. There is a peace that reaches deeper into us than our minds. May we have peace. Yes, I know that words don’t always give us peace. Words can fall short. But words can also be what we remember.

“The peace that passes all understanding.”

You know, I never actually heard my grandfather say those words. I never really knew that grandfather very well. He died when I was young.

What I remember is what my mother said about him. I remember his words, as told to me by someone else’s words. I am glad someone, my mother, remembered him.

We are here, today, to do precisely that. To remember people. It is good to remember my grandfather today, with all the saints. And it is good, so good, to remember all those whom you bring here today, and whom we all remember.

Yes, say something holy about your loved one today. Remember them. If we remember them, then our children will, too, and their children will too. And their children’s children will, too.

We call these remembrances “the communion of saints.” They are the people who touched us in deep ways, in ways that were often beyond our understanding. But as we remember their touch, and their words, they show us again something about God, something that passes all our understanding.

We believe in the communion of saints. They become real when we remember them. They join us at the altar with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven. And, there, we have peace, a peace that passes all understanding.

AMEN.

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