
Grief and Blessed Hope!

A sermon by the Rev. Canon Salmoon Bashir
Choral Requiem Eucharist on the Sunday after All Saints' Day

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen!

Blessed are you who mourn now. Blessed are you who weep now. Blessed are you who cry now. Blessed are you who grieve.

Earlier this year, I was at the crossroads of life and death – the new life in the form of our son and the death of my mother, just a few weeks apart. Meal deliveries arrived from our friends and our community after the passing of my mother, and then again after the birth of our son. The contrast was almost unbearable. As one life slipped through my fingers, another was placed into my arms. I was grieving and rejoicing, aching and overflowing.

Over these last 8 months, life and death have walked side by side for me, still at the crossroads of seeing a new life and facing loss at the same time. We live in the space of Holy Saturday, between the sorrow of death of Good Friday and hope of resurrection of Easter Sunday.

Grief is a difficult experience, but it is also very holy.

Grief is holy. Mourning is holy. Jesus said, “Blessed are you who weep. Blessed are you who mourn.” And dare I add, “Blessed are you who find hope in the silent tears.” People have asked me many times over these past months, “How do I find hope after losing my mother?”

My answer is this: I find hope in tears. I find hope in mourning. I find hope in remembering and sharing stories of my mother. And I find hope in the promise of resurrection. The impossible hope of resurrection that lives right alongside the deep pain of what has been lost.

Years ago, one of my friends introduced me to a book *To bless a space between us* by John O'Donohue, an Irish poet and theologian. Many times, when I find myself short of words and grieving my own grief, I turn to one of the poems in the book titled *Grief*. I would like to read a few lines from that:

When you lose someone you love,
Your life becomes strange,
The ground beneath you gets fragile,
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;
And some dead echo drags your voice down
Where words have no confidence.
Your heart has grown heavy with loss;
And though this loss has wounded others too,
No one knows what has been taken from you
When the silence of absence deepens.

Friends, grief is hard, and grief is holy. It reshapes the ground beneath your feet in ways no one else can fully see or understand.

Some days it feels like you are standing still, other days like you are caught in a spiral that keeps pulling you deeper.

People around you might try to help, but only you know what it is like to live inside your own loss. In those spiraling moments, when the pain feels endless, try to remember this: the presence of pain is a sign of love that still matters.

You are not broken. You are bearing witness to something sacred, the cost of having cared deeply. Grief teaches you how to carry what you have lost with gentleness and grace, even as life slowly begins to take shape again around it. That is the mystery of grief, it's both holy and deeply personal. It asks you to hold sorrow and love in the same breath.

And friends, through grieving we enter into the mystery of Christ who grieved for his friend Lazarus. We enter into the incarnate life of Jesus, the one who cried, who mourned, who felt the full weight of human sorrow.

In grief, we share in that same mystery: a God who does not stay distant from pain but steps right into it with us. But grief does not end there. Through it, we also enter into the holy hope of Christ, the one who died and rose again, giving us the promise that death is not the final word. When Jesus rose, the marks of his suffering did not disappear.

The wounds remained, but they were transformed into scars. They were no longer sources of pain, but signs of redemption.

In the same way, our grief changes with time. The pain does not vanish, and we never forget the ones we have lost. Yet through the hope we have in Jesus Christ, our wounds begin to heal into scars. We carry them, not as reminders of what is gone, but as witnesses of love that endures. Through those scars, we find courage to hope again, to smile when we remember, and to love with a deeper, quieter strength.

Grief, in its deepest form, is a sacred teacher. It draws us into the very heart of Christ, the one who wept, who suffered, and who carried death itself so that we might know resurrection. At first, the absence of our loved one feels like a void, a gap in the air that we cannot ignore.

But slowly, we begin to know them in a new way, not with our eyes, but with our hearts. As the work of grief is done, the wound of loss begins to heal. Like the risen Christ who still bore his scars, our wounds do not disappear. Instead, they are transformed. The pain becomes a doorway to love that endures beyond death.

And we learn that their presence is not lost. It has been transformed, steady and enduring, a hidden warmth we carry with us, a sign of the resurrection promise that death does not have the final word.

Friends, you who are weeping, you who are mourning, know that you are blessed and not alone in your grief. You are close to the heart of Jesus, sharing the pain, sorrow and also the everlasting hope of resurrection.

Through Jesus Christ, we hold on to the promise that one day we will see the faces of our loved ones again. With that hope, even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.