
Blanketed by Grace

[Click here for the podcast.](#)

A Sermon by the Reverend Canon Elizabeth Knowlton

Ephesians 1:11-23 & Luke 6:20-31

Whenever my son Matthew is home sick from school, we prepare a special place on the couch for him. We place the T.V. tray next to him. I bring whatever drink he will have by his side. It is the only time we still pull out the plastic straws. We gather and fluff pillows behind his head, and he is almost ready. Then he'll say, "Can you bring me grandpa's blanket?" "Of course," I reply. As I tuck him into his cocoon he'll often ask, "Is this the grandpa that was so happy I was born?" "Yes," I reply, "He always said he had to wait a long time to finally get another boy in the family. He loved you very much"

Grandpa's blanket at first glance is not much to look at. It is an increasingly tattered quilt, covered with lighthouses. The red fabric bleeds over the seams from the time I left it too long in the washing machine. And the less frequently it is washed, the more Matthew loves it.

It is the quilt my mother purchased because it reminded her of her father. It is the quilt she used to tuck him into bed in the nursing home, as she placed his thickened water within reach on a nearby tray. It is the quilt that was on his bed the day he died.

It was covered with lighthouses because my grandfather loved them. I don't know how a man who spent decades working in a steel mill came to love them. But love them he did. When we traveled as a family growing up, we would seek out lighthouse postcards, like searching for hidden treasures. I don't know how he came to love lighthouses, but it is the appropriate relic to honor his life.

He cast a guiding light through our family. Whether it was sunny or stormy, he could be counted on to be there--to be present, and if needed offer the light. His light shined in areas he hadn't been. It guided my mother to college, and that lives on in my daughter's love of school. He lives on when my husband measured, and re-measured, the place where our mirror would hang above the mantle, making sure it was perfect. Rather than throwing my hands up in frustration, I thought of my grandfather's loving care, taking three days to hang wallpaper in my childhood dollhouse to make sure the pattern matched in all the right places.

His light was brightest in the love he showed my grandmother. As she slipped into the cloud of Alzheimer's disease, he kept caring for her, reminding us that he married her for better or for worse. I carry that light with me each time I visit Fountainview, to make a pastoral call to someone who is also slipping away.

"For to your faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended." This line from the burial office captures the gift we have in the communion of the saints. We cannot help but remember and keep the lives of our loved ones present with us. Their lives are changed when they leave their earthly bodies, but they are with us. They are our inheritance.

"In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel, (Ephesians 1:11) "

We gather on this All Hallows Eve to celebrate and remember our inheritance. You may be present to hear a particular name read during the prayers. A name of a beloved family member, or a dear friend you lost in the past year. You might be in a place of peace about your loss, or you may still be in the throes of grief. Wherever you are, let this gathering honor

and support the inheritance you have from your loved one.

You may be here because you are a lover of music. Our love of music is a precious inheritance from the saints who have come before us. And, Maurice Duruflé's father still lives on in this music which was composed in his honor. The communion of the saints is more expansive than what we imagine or see. It is not just contained within the names we will read today, or the music we will hear. It is not even limited to all the Christians that have walked the way of Jesus before us. It is here, right now in this space. We are the saints. We are the hope of the Church and the hope of the world.

This may seem a bit surprising. We might not look like much at first glance. Our worn and tattered places might make us easy to overlook. But, look a little closer. There are people in this assembly who each day care for the poor, feed the hungry, and wipe away the tears of those who weep. There are people in this sacred space who bring the gifts and graces of their forbearers, and continue their legacy without even realizing it. Each person here and all those we encounter are part of the great story of God. We each add our lives to the Body of Christ.

Matthew was fairly young when my grandfather died. My son will probably not remember my grandfather, except through pictures and his beloved quilt. But Matthew knows he is beloved. He knows that his arrival was anticipated and greeted with joy. That knowledge will warm him on the coldest of days and during the bitterest of life's disappointments. It is the love of God and it is available to each one of us. Which saint first let you know that?

Amen