

The saints' life with God
Reverend Rob Lamerton
2 November 2003, All Saints

- Wisdom 3:1-9
- Psalm 24:1-6
- Revelation 21:1-6a
- John 11: 32-44

This is transcribed from notes.

At each funeral, we have the option to reflect on the paschal candle as a symbol of Christ's light / water as a symbol of our baptism / a bible as a symbol of the Word of God and a cross.

On Friday as I pulled out the cross I use on such occasions, I remembered Joe Loudon who made it. Joe also made the humorous little carving of a Judge in the Rectory living room. As I pondered how the cross revived memories of Joe—reading poetry at the Burra Carols, —sitting around the fire talking

I also thought about how small things recall people.

Marie Lewis—buttercups in the Memorial garden (that she always wanted pulled out! there are a couple there now!)

My sister—tennis ball and beach tennis bat

my Grandfather—collection of collar studs in a box

Trish Young—Koomari EZ Iron

[comments were expanded here]

Those are memories in my head and helpful as I recall.

But they do not tell us the nature of the life of these people with God. We can only wonder! There are many images in the scriptures and a couple in our reading today. They are tantalizing images but still do not answer the question fully. However they might enliven our imagination and encourage our spirit.

The Wisdom of Solomon

Although attributed to Solomon his name never appears; parts of it reflect Solomon's prayer from Wisdom from 1Kings3:6-9. In fact it probably had nothing to do with Solomon and was more likely written in Alexandria (Nth Africa) the largest Jewish Centre of the dispersed Jewish population probably only about 100BC.

**Ch 1-5 deal with the gift of immortality/and this is a breakthrough in biblical thought/

This wisdom was a true wisdom from God and offered strength and consolation to this dispersed community of Jews. Immortality was a gift of God to the righteous not the result of an immortal soul.

There is a similarity to the emphasis on grace in the N.T. teaching of Jesus — that membership in the kingdom was gift of God, eternal life a gift from God — NOT something to be earned but something to be received as a gift.

NB Wisdom3:9

The author speaks of the oppression of the righteous and how human beings are made "in the image of God's eternity" and those who belong to the devil experience death.

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will ever touch them.

The author of Revelation brings his dramatic book to a conclusion with the image of a holy city coming down out of heaven from God. This is God's end to the great struggle of the faithful!

And the image is that in God's city tears will be no more; death, moving crying and pain no more. All things will be new! And this indicates what we trust will be true for the departed saints of God!

Finally — the story of Jesus raising Lazarus!

and I wonder why Jesus would do this only to have Lazarus die finally some years later (we are not told how long after.)

Although we do hear that Lazarus was present at a meal with Jesus a little while later! This is one of 3 raisings of dead people.

Jairus' daughter in Mk 5:22-43

Widow's son at Nain in Luke 7:11-17

The fact that they are all different and no story is common to all gospels may indicate various versions of a similar story.

This story recalls Jesus healing of the man born blind and seems to be a progression from that... i.e. God working through Jesus not only has power over human sickness but also has power over life and death itself.

The fact that Lazarus "has been dead four days" and there is already a "stench" indicates that God in Jesus has power over the corruption of our humanity this stench might symbolize some of the stench of corruption in the world. In the end this is a story about God's power over death and a foretaste of Jesus' own Resurrection for that is at the heart of what we believe for the saints and for ourselves that God's grace calls us into relationship making us the righteous ones and therefore showing in God's new life a freedom. Wisd.3:1

It is God who holds us together in fellowship with the saints and faithful people of every age... All Saints/Souls comes at a time when we have reflected Sunday by Sunday on the growth in grace and just as our Sunday readings begin to focus on the end times. It is a time to take heart, be encouraged and renewed as we give thanks for our unity with faithful people of every age in God's great love and grace.