

All Saints' Day 2020

There once was a Persian King, who wanted to know the one unchangeable truth of life, a truth which would be true for all times and places. So he gathered the greatest minds of his land and asked them to discover this truth for him. After some time, these philosophers appeared before the King and presented him with a ring. Inscribed on this ring was their answer to his question. What is the one unchangeable truth: "This too shall pass". We gather this morning to celebrate All Saints' Day. A day set aside each year to remember the dead. We remember all who have gone before us and have fallen asleep in the arms of Christ. This day we remember all the prophets, apostles, and every Christian of the past, who went to their grave trusting the Lord above all things. But what is the value of such a remembrance? Why spend any amount of time thinking about the departed for what can we learn from those who are dead? In a word: perspective. Remembering the dead brings a certain clarity and perspective to our lives. The dead remind us it's all be done before, said before, tried before. So what's the point? What's the real meaning behind this short dash between the two formidable dates of birth and death? Soon after we arrive on this earth we become aware of the fact that we won't be here very long. If we are fortunate, we have roughly 30,000 days upon this earth. That's the first sobering realization. The second is the moment we discover the absurdity of life. It's as if the stage collapses upon us all of a sudden. Day after day- rising, working, eating, sleeping and then as if by a flash it hits us- "Why?" "Why am I going through the motions like this?" The absurdity of life and death break upon us- the mechanical gestures, the meaningless pantomime, the mundane routines- everything seems silly. The human need for meaning collides with the meaningless silence of the world. What's worse, everyone around us goes on living as if no one "knew" that time is carrying us onwards toward oblivion.

That nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute, that desire for permanence illustrates the essential impulse of the human drama. All Saints' Day serves to give us perspective on such things. The deathless voices of those who have died in Christ continue to speak; they call from beyond the Great Beyond. And what do they say? They remind us of how trivial it all is. The eating and drinking, the buying and selling, the worrying and maneuvering and scheming, it's all so...meaningless. "For time, like an ever rolling stream, soon bears us all away and we fly forgotten as a dream dies at the opening day". The worries of today will be forgotten tomorrow.

We all worry every day of our lives. But I ask you what were you worried about this time last year or two years ago? If you are like me you don't remember. And if you do remember you probably think to yourself how silly it was to worry about such a thing for it all worked out just fine. And even if it didn't work out fine, it worked out nonetheless and you dealt with it and most likely learned some valuable life lesson from it. So why did you worry to begin with? O' the wretched sinners we are! Lord I believe, help me in my unbelief! For no matter how many times God proves to us that He is in control we still can't help ourselves from sweating the small stuff of life, getting lost in the minutia.

We must fight against such things and, if we must, we must fight against our own instincts. "This too shall pass" should be our own life mantra. For it is not just good advice, its godly advice. Dust we are and to dust we shall return. Everything is in a constant state of change, everything that exists will one day cease to exist. It's all meaningless. Everything will pass away, everything except for us. For unlike the other created things of this world, God has placed eternity into the hearts of all people. He has given us immortal souls. We can't fathom non-existence because our minds instinctively know the everlasting. Death is not an end, but a blessed beginning. In fact, "blessed in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints". One day soon the trials and tribulations of this life will stop. The sorrows will come to an end. Even our tears will cease to exist as God wipes them from our eyes. But what will remain for all eternity will be us and God. We will rise from the dust of death to stand before the Lord of Life. All Saints' Day gives us a glimpse, a foretaste of what is to come. And this preview of future things helps us to live meaningful lives in the here and now. Our days should not be spent worrying about petty, worldly things. Let the godless worry about such things. Let us instead set our minds on things above. We can live this way because knowing Christ gives us perspective, so that there is no room for fear or doubt. He has gone before us to prepare a place that is beyond the reach of this broken world and very soon He will come to take us home. Whereupon we will make our grand exit from this Great Tribulation called life, marked with its trials and tribulations and death, and join the angels and archangels and the whole company of heaven in singing the praises of the One, who conquered death and the grave and opened for us the way of everlasting life. This is God's everlasting promise to us, and along with God's Kingdom, these things shall never pass. Amen.