Grace and Peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In today’s story of the raising of Lazarus, we gather at a newly occupied tomb, surrounded by emotions of grief, sadness at a loss, and anger. Mixed in with an accusation. Mary told Jesus if he were there her rother would not have died. Does this mean Mary’s faith meant she believed he could have saved him? Her faith, however, does not extend to the ability of Jesus to raise Lazarus from the dead, even though he had done this in the past. Mixed in with an accusation. Had she not heard about these instances? We all wish our loved one would not die and can pray that they will live but this is not always the way things turn out. We have all heard about Doctors saying someone was not going to survive, but they do. For those of us who have experienced the loss of a congregant or loved one we understand these raw emotions. Yet, we hear of the thprofound emotional responses of Jesus. He is “greatly disturbed,”, a word that commonly signifies indignation or anger. He is greatly disturbed and deeply moved and he weeps. What can we make of this? Is it an indication of human grief felt by Jesus? Is he upset because the crowd’s grief is hypocritical? Is he angry at people’s continued inability to believe? Is he upset because his own death and tomb are approaching? Perhaps all of these but Jesus is not unmoved in the presence of this death and grief. It shows that Jesus understands our sorrow and mourning and trying to deal with loss.

As we celebrate All Saints Day, we realize it is not just to remember the saints from long ago or those whose deaths are still painfully near, and not even to look ahead to that ultimate promise of resurrection, though both of these are certainly part of this day and are to be affirmed. Especially celebrating those that have gone before us the last 12 months, specifically Julie Anderson. But ultimately this day is about what all God’s saints have not only have known but experienced, that here and now there is no death or grief or fear or emotion so deep and dark that the voice of Jesus cannot reach into and bring life. Jesus raising Lazarus does not negate the promise of the day that is coming when all those in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, but this is the primary claim. What this act reveals is that Jesus is the one in whom there is life the one who even now calls us out of all the dark and binding places of death. In grief, people do not only need or want to know that Jesus is powerful enough to raise the dead. It is why didn’t Jesus didn’t do more to help our own family member we lost? If he can raise Lazarus why not our loved one that everyone prayed so hard they would be healed. Why doesn’t Jesus put an end to all the death in the world? But Jesus is life; Jesus himself is the resurrection’s defeat of death. Jesus is the place where death ends, and an everlasting life begins. Death is not the end of life. It is new life for the glory of God. On both sides of the grave there is life for us because Jesus has been sent for us. On both sides of the grave Jesus is life for us. That is why I could boldly proclaim at Julie’s celebration of life she is ok.

We find Jesus accompanying us in our sorrow as we her how Jesus wept for his beloved friend. This is a perfect story for All Saints Sundy as we believe in Christ and that in Christ the power of death will be defeated. Death where is thy sting? The sting is missing those saints who have before us in this world, but the sting is taken away when we realize the last word is not death and because of Christ we will be able to see him and our loved one again. That is why remembering them is a time of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving for the time we had with them on earth but thanksgiving we will be able to see them in the future. The synoptic gospels tell of two other resuscitation stories—the daughter of Jairus and the widow’s only son—but John’s story is the most detailed as a proclamation of the power of Christ over death. John wants everyone to know that Jesus is the Son of Man. Because of our belief in Christ Christians can trust that the mercy of God will prevail over their own death and that of those they love. Ironically, by raising Lazrus this was an act that set in motion the authorities the plotting his crucifixion of ending Jesus life. This resulted in the tomb being found empty and his being unbound with these being the only thing found in the tomb. The same way we will be unbound because when Jesus says “Unbind him and let him go” this is all about resurrection life. Jesus understands our sorrow as he weeps with those who are mourning, but his actions are bursting with resurrecting life and is a precursor to his glorious resurrection. This story proclaims the power of Christ over death. This is good news - Christians can trust that the mercy of God will prevail over their own death and that of those they love and assure us we will see our loved ones again. These words are spoken by the one who became human and was laid in a tomb, but Christ broke through the veil of death. He was no longer going to be with us on earth but we can spend eternity in a close, personal relationship with Christ. In the living waters of baptism in the font, we hear our God speak these words to us as we are marked on our foreheads with the cross of Christ forever. These words assure us in the waters, marking our forehead with the cross of Christ where God’s very Spirit is present in the flame of the baptismal candle. God frees us from the bindings s of death and dresses us in the royal clothing of Christ. Then at the table, we feast with the God in whom we have waited, a God who swallows up death forever. The last word is not death, but life as a beloved child of God and assure us we will see this saint again when our earthly life comes to an end. Even though Julie will be missed in our journey on earth we will see Julie again when we too are resurrected. Also, Jesus has the power to give life now, because Jesus is the presence of God’s life become flesh for us.

Now, Craig has some words for us….. Amen