

Last week I mentioned I went to New York recently. I was there because several years ago, Pastor Jim re-introduced me to Thornton Wilder's play, *Our Town*. I had seen it before, but to hear Jim and his friend and teaching mentor, Cathy Sabastian, talk about it made me realize how much of it I didn't fully appreciate. When Cathy passed away earlier this year and Jim and I planned her Celebration of Life service, it was quotes from *Our Town* that felt the most authentic for her as she had spent so much of her life not only teaching that play to her students, but also yearning to live its truth. So, when *Our Town* opened on Broadway, we knew we had to go...not just to experience an amazing play, but to go to celebrate a beautiful legacy of learning and loving.

There are a few quotes from *Our Town* that get me every time, especially in terms of what we are celebrating today...the tension between sorrow and hope, between living and dying. One is spoken by the character Emily, who is unexpectedly faced with the reality of death and pleads with those who can no longer listen: "Let's really look at one another!...It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another. I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed... Oh, earth, you are too wonderful for anybody to realize you. Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it--every, every minute? (Emily asks the narrator)" and the Narrator says, "No, the saints and the poets, maybe they do some." By the end of the play, I was shocked to look and see audience members weeping and hugging one another...the passion of Emily's speech hitting all of us hard and opening our eyes to see...really see... how easy it is to let time slip away without really living in it.

On days like this, as we prepare to light candles of remembrance, we come face to face with how quickly time moves. We light candles to signify that the light of their presence remains in our midst...but we mourn because the time with them always feels far too short. Jesus, standing beside the tomb of his friend Lazarus, weeps. He sees the sisters, Mary and Martha, grieving the loss of time and it moves him...to see their realization that the time to live is too short, that death makes time feel too long... Jesus, standing outside the tomb and asking, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" See...look...be aware...that God moves in life as well as death. See...look...be aware as Saints who believe in God...and as poets who proclaim God in all manner of words and images and metaphors...that the beauty of living, and maybe even the sorrow of death, is found in the places where love and awareness meet...where our eyes are really open to see each other and being grateful for it.

All Saints is our reminder to look. Jesus – looked and saw the pain of his friends, and it moved him to reveal God's glory. John – looked and saw hope for the world – hope that the world will come to see the fullness of God's presence in ways that are life-giving and healing.

Look, Jesus says....See, John pleads...God is right here. God is here when we can look each other in the eye and see a spark of God's creation there. God is here when we look and see the little moments that make up a life's journey...the mistakes as well as the miracles...the joy as well as the sorrow...the work as well as the restfulness. God is here, dwelling among us...within us...Saints and poets...look, really look, and see. We are all traveling the same journey, fellow pilgrims on the road, we are here to help each other walk a mile and share the load. Those are the words of our next anthem, but it is the next line that hits deep today: I will hold the Christ light for you in the nighttime of your fear, I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

Time is both short and eternal...both sorrowful and joy filled. What we must do to make the most of it is see...really see...the beauty of all of it, the light that never diminishes and the promise that the goodness is what is eternal. See...really see...the eternal connection of the saints who were, who are, and who are to come...and whether at the tomb or at the table...rejoice together in the glory of the God whose home is among us there...in momentary sorrow and eternal peace.