

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

November 7, 2021
ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

Grace, peace, and mercy from God Our lord and Savior Jesus Christ, amen

Good morning. It is a pleasure and honor to be with this morning to preach on this All-saints Sunday. I have had the pleasure of knowing a number of people who have been members at St Johns over the years. In my earliest days in Minnesota, I met St John members like, Mariann Budde, Michelle Dibblee and others who provided leadership in Isaiah faith-based community organizing. I met Richard Howard back when he was with the Fairview Foundation, and Julie Rowe when she assisted a seminary student seeking assistance with her immigration status. I met Pastor Susan as a resident in the Bren Mayr neighborhood, just a few blocks from the congregation I served for twenty in North Minneapolis. I blessed to know these members of St Johns before I ever saw this building and possibly before I had ever stepped foot in Linden Hills. I started thinking about your name, St John the Baptist, Linden Hills and I started to think about the “reach” of St John the Baptist Episcopal Church.

On Friday I was watching the funeral service for General Colin Powell at the Washington Cathedral where Mariann Buddy happens to be the Bishop. Colin Powell was an amazing man and an Episcopalian his entire life. His faith was very important to him. In the remarks his son gave eulogizing his father his son quoted David Brooks. In David Brooks book, the Road to Character, David Brooks stated something like, “At the end of our days we leave behind two witnesses to our character. We witness to our “Resume Character” and “Eulogy character.” Resume character speaks to things like accomplishments, acquisition, and winning. Eulogy character speaks to attributes like humility, service to others, and generosity. On this All-Saints Sunday, I think about how this is a time when we as a church focus on our corporate calling as a faithful people to be a virtuous people, a “Eulogy people.”

It was a year ago last July that I was present at the Prayer Tent Don and Sondra Samuels established along Broadway Avenue during the disruption following the murder of George

Floyd. I met Pastor Lisa among the many folks gathering at prayer and tent. I was not conscious of it at the time, but the gathering at the Prayer Tent was a time and space of eulogy, stepping out of the rhythm of hustle and bustle, fear, and competition. It wasn't in a church building. We weren't singing songs out of a hymnal, and North Broadway was not what we normally think of as a sanctuary.

A few years ago, before there was a pandemic I was working in my garage and I was listening to NPR. They were broadcasting the program from the state fair. During the program they were featuring two chefs, one was Hmong and the other was Latinex. The program was about how the food scene in Minneapolis was becoming more diverse and the dining experience in the Twin Cities was expanding. Minnesota is a much larger story than the one that was told by Garrison Keillor. The NPR producer introduced the topic of Minnesota food and she talked about "hot dish" as a kind of model Minnesota food. The producer asked if in other ethnicities they knew of a food that compared to "hot dish?". The Hmong chef began to talk about how in the Hmong tradition they have something called, Pho. She began to describe in the Hmong tradition how families gather together around the holidays and in family gatherings they make Pho. She described in great detail how they begin by making a broth base. Then they add Vegetables, spices, pork, chicken, seafood and they would have this wonderful meal known as Pho.

Then the Latinex chef stated how in the Spanish tradition, families gather around holidays like Christmas and new years and prepare a meal called Paella. The chef described how the family would cook rice and add spices like saffron. Then they would add other spices, vegetables, sausage, and seafood and the family would gather around the comfort food called Paella. Then the producer asked the question, how do you know if someone will become a good cook? Both the chefs responded with the answer that they can tell if someone will be a good cook if they have something called "taste memory."

I believe this is a wonderful description for the church and All Saints Day. This is a day for us to celebrate "taste memory" in remembering baptism and celebration at the table. "Taste memory" is the singing of the hymns and the witness of those who have gone before us, even

as they may be still living. Taste memory here in this sanctuary in Linden Hills. In the gathering at the Prayer Tent along North Broadway, in the National Cathedral, and the celebration of the life of an Episcopalian General and a life well lived.

Before I end, I would like to draw our attention to our gospel text for this Sunday from John. It's the well know story about Lazarus when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. This is a powerful story and I just can't let us go without touching on the story. Lazarus has been dead for four days when Jesus finally shows up and the scene is where Martha cautions Jesus that Lazarus has been dead for four days. Martha warns Jesus that if he goes into that grave site, where Lazarus had been decaying, there will be a stench. I think about all the places where people tell us we shouldn't go. They warn us that shouldn't go into those places and be around those people because there will be a stench. If we get too close to those places that stench is going to get on us. Quite often the result is we don't go to those places. We don't go to 38th and Chicago. We don't go to North Minneapolis. We don't go to the encampments. We don't go to those places because someone is trying to protect us, warn us about the stench. So, too often we don't go. But Jesus does!

The other thing I want to lift up from the text is, Jesus reaching into the tomb where Lazarus is lying dead and Jesus commands Lazarus to COME OUT!" Then Jesus turns to the disciples, the people like you and people like me and Jesus says, UNBIND HIM. Jesus says, that is our job. It is our job to take off the cloth of death, depression, unworthiness, fear, and doubt of people we encounter whether they be on North Broadway, Linden Hills, South Minneapolis, or a prison.

I will leave you with a lesson I learned a long time ago. I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. Our parents had migrated from the agricultural segregated south seeking a better life in the industrial integrated north. I was the third child of twelve children. My brothers and I would occasionally venture out on a brave safari to catch bumble bees. We would go to our parents cupboard to find a nearly empty jar. With twelve kids it was not a challenge to find a nearly empty jar. We would punch holes in the lid of the jar and then head off on the dangerous safari to capture bumble bees. Once the bees were in the jar they would fly angrily against the sides of the jar. What we discovered was after just a couple of hours we would take the lid off the jar

and the bees, though they were free, they would remain inside the jar. Though they were free they were conditioned to remain in the jar. God, in the person of Jesus Christ has come into the world to say to us in the reality of the cross, we are set free. We can come out.

The witness of Jesus Christ, the church, Colin Powell, St John's, you and me, all who have gone before us, is to go back out into the world. Face the stench. Be the voice of Jesus saying, COME OUT!

To the STENCH OF RACISM...COME OUT

TO THE STENCH OF....FEAR AND DOUBT

TO THE STENCH OF SEXISM...COME OUT! COME OUT! COME OUT!

Amen