Pastor Troy E. Medlin
All Saints 2026
Grace, River Forest
11/1/2026

Singing Each Other Home

On Friday I was able to hangout with the senior kindergarten class at Grace. I read them a Halloween book and got to hear all about their costumes. Spiderman, a police officer, Elfaba, and so many others. Ms. Johnson, the SK teacher, has taught them well that Halloween is all about "fun!"My favorite Halloween costume was probably when I was around seven years old and dressed up as Dick Van Dyke from Mary Poppins. I had two costumes. For the school parade during the day I was Dick Van Dyke the chimney sweep and then during trick or treating at night I was the tap dancer. Costumes/what we wear can tell quite a story.

It can even be fun to dress up as an adult, just don't be like me. I went to a Halloween party last year but waited until 4:30 in the afternoon on Halloween to pick out a costume in the nearly empty halloween aisle at Walgreens. I was a spider.

Costumes worn anytime can be silly and teach us to not take ourselves too seriously. There are other ways we dress up though, especially as we grow older. Our own costumes where we try to scare people, or not spook ourselves. We dress up in order to hide our own mortality, weakness, or vulnerability. Covering up the fact we need help or assistance. We try on outfits both real and imagined that present ourselves in ways that we think other people want to see or as a way to measure ourselves or differentiate ourselves over and against others. We wear masks in order to win the approval of others or to project strength and success and competency all while we still struggle.

We wear titles, degrees, names, and achievements as if they are indelibly stitched onto our bodies- and when they get taken away or run their course, or are not appreciated how we imagine they should be, we are frightened and don't know what to do with ourselves. We get lulled into believing those outfits are who we really are. What we wear or what seems to wear us can tell quite a story.

What's at the heart of our dressing up- not the fun kind? The fear of not measuring up or fitting in, or being exposed as a mere mortal or more than the sum of our ability to produce, seen for who we really are, wounds and all, or the fear of being forgotten or alone. All familiar feelings.

In the beatitudes we find that this is the place that Jesus joins us. Remember, the beatitudes are not law but gospel.These are not demands to muster up blessedness, just a promise that is the company that Jesus keeps. In Matthew Jesus promises to join us in the very places we feel most

lost or vulnerable, fragile, forgotten, exposed, or inadequate. Among those who mourn, beside the meek, and alongside the poor in spirit. As one singer/songwriter riffed, blessed are the poor, blessed are the weak, blessed are the ones who can barely speak, blessed in your hurt, blessed in your pain, blessed when your teardrops are falling down like rain, blessed when you're broken, blessed when you're fragile. When you have lost your mind, blessed when you're desperate, blessed when you're scared, blessed when you're lonely, blessed when you've failed-- only because in that exact moment the God of all creation insists on joining you fully and completely there-- wrapping Jesus's own broken, bruised, and tear stained arms around you, and will never let you go. It's where he has always spent his time. It's the company he keeps. You are never alone.

With Jesus by our side, on this All Saints Day, we speak the names of our beloved who have died in the past year. Isn't it true that one of the scariest things about death is that we are afraid of being alone? Yet- in every death, there is Jesus still keeping company with us and still by our side. So, we remember these so dear to us and so dear to God. The life they lived and the life they live now. Remembering as an act of love. As Pastor Lyle reminds us, they are still with Jesus and since Jesus is with us, they are never far away. Blessed Peter, Miriam, Marilyn, Barbara, Yvonne, David, John, Joan, Dean, Rosie, Marge, Winnie, Rhea, Linda, Barbara. Each still so loved by God and so loved by us. We say *Blessed are those beloved ones*- for God is their home.

We catch a glimpse of them in John's vision in Revelation. Those who have made it through the great ordeal or the great grinding down. Those who know of all the ways the world attempts to crush God's little ones. They have been vindicated. Rescued. Healed. Put back together. Made whole. Brought to the other side. They are wearing robes that have been washed in the blood of the lamb. It's like how we know that what we wear can tell a story.

This costume party is different. It includes the lost, forgotten, worn down, and you and me. All who Jesus keeps company with. Our loved ones and all who have been baptized into Christ's own death and resurrection. All those clothed in God's spacious and roomy mercy and love. A garment gifted by grace alone. This baptismal robe will outlast all of the other ways that we try to dress ourselves up or the ways the world attempts to fit us. As all the other costumes fray and fall apart. This remains as does this God's love for you. Clothed in God is who you are and who you forever will be. No one can take that away.

What are they doing in these robes? Singing. We could think of this robe as our choir robe. All of us. Here and in the choir that never ceases to raise their voices in endless song. When we sing, we momentarily join their unending hymn to the lamb. Singing is a way that we remind ourselves that we are never too far from those who have gone before us. Our voices blend with theirs-- with those 15 and so many more saying "Salvation belongs to God and to the lamb

forever and ever." If you listen closely you can hear the melody strike you in the key of your heart.

As we sing, we remember and experience Jesus's words at the end of the beatitudes. Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in Heaven. What's the reward if not community? Community with God. The communion of saints. A whole cheering section running alongside you until we are reunited again. All of the great cloud of witnesses singing you and all of us home in the end. This is your baptismal birthright and like that robe can never be taken away from you. You have a place in this great multitude. Don't be afraid. You will never be alone. Remember the company Jesus keeps?

Until we join them- we can drop our disguises. You have the right outfit. God's life tailor made for your flesh and blood. You are set for the only costume party in the end-- a feast that stretches out into the world to come. What we wear tells quite a story. The best way to share it is to sing.