

#52 15-16

Psalm 149

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18

Ephesians 1:11-23

Luke 6:20-31

## *Being Saints*

**<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. <sup>21</sup>“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. <sup>22</sup>“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. <sup>24</sup>“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. <sup>25</sup>“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. “Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. <sup>26</sup>“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. <sup>27</sup>“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.**

Being a “Saint” is a thought that carries all kinds of reactions. For Protestants it may carry more “leaning on the negative” feelings. We don’t practice the Saints Days, although we do respect them, it isn’t part of our tradition. Mostly when I have heard the term it was in used in a rather ironic tone of voice as in, “You trying to be Saint or something?” Or as a firm proud statement, “I’m no Saint!” Being ~ or striving to be ~ a Saint seems to be, in many schools of thought, a bit ridiculous.

However, there is an early church understanding of what it means to be a Christian that lends us another interpretation. Some churches actually have as part of their liturgy a greeting to each other, in which they call each other Saints. It grows to become a simple reminder to think of each other and to treat each other as saints, and perhaps also a reminder to live like one. Rev. Guy D. Nave Jr. wrote, “In the New Testament, ‘saints’ (hagioi) is the most commonly used title for Christians. It literally means ‘holy ones,’ and was used to refer to Jesus-followers because they were consecrated to God by the atonement of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.” So, basically, everyone of us, who claim to live a life dedicated to Christ, could carry also the title, “Saint”, as in “communion of the . . .”

Catholics have a different understanding of who can claim the title of Saint and their understanding has often set us to question our worthiness. None of us would feel comfortable with the title if we see the prerequisite as being able to perform miracles and live pure, pious, lives always. So, let us imagine for a few minutes, what life would be like if we were to start calling each other Saints.

When Paul wrote, in our Epistle to the Ephesians scripture from today: “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints . . .” he was referring to people who were alive and living and teaching and serving the communities. He was referring to the power

of all those who recognize bond between God and humanity through knowing Christ. There is a unity of all humanity with God that encompasses the mystical realm of life and death. And when we live for unity we have access to that power. It is a power that surpasses the border of life and death. Wikipedia: the "Christian celebration of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day stems from a belief that there is a powerful bond between those in heaven (the 'Church triumphant') and the living (the 'Church Militant')."

And we are here today to celebrate that bond. Let us close our eyes for a moment and think about those people of faith who have gone before us. We may not see them as Saints - but they were not placed on this earth to be perfect, as none of us are. Those imperfect souls who have gone before were seekers. And they were strivers. No one can live in this world without challenges and struggles, and God is about Grace, as we loving Christians are about grace. Those souls who have gone are now part of the universe, and see clearly. And we pray that our weaknesses will be forgiven, as we pray to forgive others whom we are not in perfect peace with. When we think on them, we are united with them across space, they on one side of life and we on the other.

Imagine those people from this church who had served here, worshiped here, walked here, rode carriages here. Those who worshiped at the other church before they built here. Imagine the struggles they had to deal with. They are our Saints now. We share with them a unity across time. Now time is no more.

Let us open up our understanding of Sainthood to those who lived and strived to know Christ. Because Jesus himself shares in this scripture who a saint is . . . who is holy . . . who is blessed . . . those who are poor, are hungry, who weep now, who are hated . . . Being, seeking and recognizing the Saints in ourselves, and each other, means we seek unity. We Disciples are a movement for wholeness in a divided world, and we are being true to our calling when we celebrate All Saints' Day. Our faith calls for us to be united across space and time, across racism, sexism and nationalism. It calls forth for us to strive for unity in love for all that God created, and in our creator's name we are called to serve. And we serve God when we do as Christ taught us:

<sup>27</sup>"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Let the people say, AMEN!