

All Saints Sunday

November 3, 2024



We are all saints, and cursed is he who does not want to call himself a saint... you do owe this not to yourself but to the will of God, who would be your Father. To call yourself a saint is, therefore, no presumption but an act of gratitude and a confession of God's blessings.

– Martin Luther –

Sermon, 1530

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17

The old Norwegian hymn “Behold a Host Arrayed in White” is sung in many Lutheran Churches on All Saints Sunday. Based on this text from Revelation 7, it is a victorious hymn, sung to God and to the Lamb, in honor of God’s great salvation and the promise of those who have gone before us in faith. And yet, these words from Revelation were written at a time of suffering and persecution. John hints at the sorrow and suffering experienced by the Church when he refers to “the great tribulation” (Rev. 7:14). This was not just some imaginary future event, but the tribulation they were already facing; the same tribulation that believers have faced throughout the centuries because of their faith in Jesus.

In the midst of evil days, Christian believers are able to speak of compassion, purpose, and hope because at the center of our lives is the One who actually gives that hope. As John says, the Lamb will be our shepherd.

- *How does the promise that God will “wipe away every tear from their eyes” (v. 17) assume that we will face times of tears? Does a life of faith mean a life without hardship?*
- *When faced with hardship and tribulation, in what does our hope lie? What does it mean to cling to Jesus when the victory still seems far off?*

Psalms 149

Stop and think of all of the people in your life that bring you delight. Certain family members likely come to mind, along with brothers and sisters in the faith. It is a true gift to have people in our lives that bring us joy and delight.

The psalmist proclaimed in this corporate praise hymn that the Lord “takes pleasure in his people.” (v.4a) How wonderful it is to know that God loves us so much that we bring him that same kind of delight that others bring to us? If it were not so, would God be so diligent about his promises to us and about showing his love for us? Certainly not!

- *As you think about the saints who have gone before you in the past year on this All Saint’s Sunday, how would you describe God’s affection for his people — even yourself?*

1 John 3:1-3

Have you ever wondered about what a child in your family will grow up to be? Sometimes we can see particular talents in a child when they are very young, such as an ability to organize toys, sort things into color groups, use a golf club, or play an instrument. It’s almost as if we can get a glimpse

of their future by looking at what they are good at in their early years of development.

St. John wrote that as God’s children, someday we will be like Jesus, but for now, that part of our lives is unknown. What we do know is that someday we will see Jesus as he is and will be made pure through him. He is the only one who can make us pure. All of this points to the most basic aspect of our relationship with God – that he calls us his children is positive proof of his great love for us according to John.

- *How do you know someone really loves you? Is it by what they say or what they do, or both?*
- *What does John mean that we will be “like Jesus” when he returns? In what way(s)?*

Matthew 5:1-12

Jesus saw that crowds were gathered around him so he went to a higher place so all could see him and he began teaching them about the kingdom of God. When Jesus used the word μακάριος (*makarios* in the Greek), he was speaking of those who are “blessed” or “favored” by God. This word carries the connotation of being happy, fortunate, or even “lucky.”

But it is hard to feel “happy” or “lucky” when we are poor in spirit, mourning, or being persecuted — especially in our culture where many people think of faith as a means to attain a successful and easy life with no troubles or sorrows. Some people will tell us, “If you just had enough faith, you wouldn’t _____.” (Then they fill in the blank with their own wishful thinking.)

- *Does being a person of faith guarantee that we will not have to deal with suffering (cancer, heart disease, house fires, loneliness, etc.)? How have you found that God more often meets us in our trials rather than in our success?*

With a biblical theology of the cross, we see that God is at work even in our deepest suffering. It is in the cross that we see most clearly who God is, in the person of Jesus, and what great love he has for us.

In the paraphrase of Matthew’s beatitudes, author Eugene Peterson renders verse 3, “You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.”

- *How does this paraphrase get at the heart of what it means to be a follower of Jesus?*
- *In what ways do these beatitudes reflect a state of being that is both already and not yet?*