

Sermon on All Saints' Sunday - A
Prepared for delivery at St. John's Lutheran Church
Pearl City, Illinois
11/4/20

From the Good News according to Matthew: "Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'"

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today is All Saints' Sunday. On this day we celebrate all of the saints, but especially we remember those who have left this life and entered into life eternal with our Lord. In this service we will read some of their names, and remember their lives, and all that they have meant to us. We will remember the examples that they set, and pray that we can be as good an example to those who follow us. We will remember some who have just recently left our close fellowship, and we will remember some who have been gone from us for a very long time; a very long time for us, I think that for them the time isn't nearly as long as we feel it to be.

We, in the Lutheran tradition, sometimes have trouble when we're talking about saints; we have trouble with just who the saints are. First off, let's deal with who they aren't. Scripturally, saints aren't just those who've led exemplary lives and have been beatified by Rome, and assigned a patronage; patronage: you know, a part of life that they're now responsible for, even though they couldn't remember applying for the job. And, saints aren't just people who have left our earthly existence either. In the Old Testament all of those who are described as being faithful, those who believe in and obey God are called saints. In the New Testament saints are all of those, living or dead, who have taken upon themselves the name of Jesus; saints are those who love and fear God, and all baptized people. You want to see a saint? Look at the pew in front of you, or behind you, or alongside of you, if you're at home, look in your kitchen, or your living room, or, lacking all of that, – look in a mirror. We, baptized persons, are all the

saints of God. Paul, addresses his letter to the church in Rome, by saying, “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.”

Today we’re trying something different, we’re going to not only have several people worshipping with us at home, but we’re going to have many of them celebrating holy Communion with us on Face Book as well. The question was asked, “Can we do that?” We certainly can. You are part of us if you’re sitting on your couch, or your kitchen chair, or in a pew here in church. In fact, all Christians, you are a part of us even if you’re not here at all.

This being All Saints’ Sunday I would like to do something that I do from time to time, I would like to read part of a hymn. In normal times, we sing these hymns all of the time, and we know them well, but we can get so caught up in the music that we sometimes forget to pay attention to the words; at least not all of the words. This is a great old hymn entitled For All the Saints: Number 422 in the red hymnal; some call it burgundy to keep from getting it mixed up with the old red hymnal, but I’m old, and this is red to me. I’ll just read the first three verses of this wonderful old hymn – and that will get me to what I want to say.

“For all the saints who from their labors rest, who thee by faith before the world confessed, thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might; thou, Lord their captain in the well-fought fight; thou, in the darkness drear their one true light. Alleluia! Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine, we feebly struggle, they in glory shine; yet all are one in thee for all are thine. Alleluia! Alleluia!” - -

O blest communion, fellowship divine. We sing that here in this hymn, and we confess it in the Apostles’ Creed, where we say that we believe in the, communion of the saints, but I don’t think that we think about what we’re saying all that much. O blest communion, and in the

Creed, we confess that we believe in the communion of the saints; but what does that mean? That means that we all are one, all the saints, right now, all who were in the past, and all who will follow us in the future. When we celebrate our Holy Communion together, we are communing with all of those here, all of those at home, and all of those who have ever taken this meal, and all of those, yet unborn, who ever will share this holy life of Jesus. We celebrate with those in the Baptist churches, with those in the Roman Catholic churches, with Methodists, Presbyterians, Brethren, with those in whatever denomination you can name, even those who don't recognize us; we know them to be sisters and brothers in Christ. When we take the body and blood of Christ into our selves, into our lives, we take Jesus' life, Jesus' ministry, Jesus' mission, into ourselves; it becomes a part of us, physically a part of us. And, we share that meal with our great, great grandparents, whom we've never met. And we share this blessed meal with our great, great grandchildren, who, we pray, will follow us in faith.

If you, here today, are remembering someone, who is no longer with us, in the flesh, know that they are as present in this meal as Jesus is. Today we celebrate, and celebrate with, all of the saints of God. Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.