

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
All Saints Day (Observed)  
1 John 3:1-3  
November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

This past month has been a whirlwind of activity around here. If you had the opportunity to be a part of it... there was an anniversaries celebration kick-off Service with a guest preacher, Pastor David Petersen. Then, Stewardship Sunday the next Sunday. Then, our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Divine Service with Rev. Dr. Hagan preaching. Then, the next Sunday we had our Anniversary brunch with the recognition of our charter members. On the Saturday after that was our Reformation Walk and German dinner. Last Sunday was Reformation Sunday with another guest preacher, Rev. Dr. Rick Marrs. I told someone that I can't wait until Advent and Christmas so that things finally slow down around here.

But they don't slow down, and that is good. Yesterday, a couple was united in Holy Matrimony before the Lord's altar to begin a new life together as husband and wife. And today is another celebration. Today is our All Saints Day celebration when we remember those who have been brought into the kingdom through the waters of Holy Baptism as well as those who have gone into glory before us into heaven. Our celebrations continue each time we are blessed to see another one of God's children receive son-ship through baptism. We rejoice when man and woman come together through God's institution of marriage. We give God all honor and praise and thanksgiving when one of our own receives their transfer to the church triumphant... albeit through the pangs of death.

At this year's annual congregational meeting I mentioned we had *fourteen* funerals since this time last year. To put that into perspective for you, we had only three the year before and seven the year before that. This is not bad news. The goal is our heavenly home. I know we have our own ideas of when that should happen, and sometimes it did happen way too soon according our calendar, but this is good news nonetheless. Our Lord received His saints into the heavenly realms and now they reside where there is not pain or consternation. They live where they don't have to worry about the mess our world is in and the moral decay of an "anything goes" society that our children are inheriting. There is no more pain, no more cancer. There is no more anxiety, depression and suffering. Where these *fourteen* have gone is to be by the Savior... the same Savior that called them His very own through adoption as sons. The Savior that called out to these men and women, you belong to me, when they receive the blessing of their Holy Baptism.

And here is more good news for you my fellow saints in the Lord. Seventeen brand new saints were adopted into the holy family by our Lord through baptism this past year. So, here is another reason to rejoice. Fourteen received their crown... the prize of life eternal. And seventeen are made by God to be fellow inheritors of the kingdom with us to fight the good fight of faith on this side of eternity, standing up for truth in the midst of the despair of sin and the hardship brought upon us through an unbelieving world. We rejoice today because our Lord has made seventeen fellow workers in the vineyard here at Christ Lutheran.

John says, "*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are... Beloved we are children NOW.*" This is what God has made us to be... saints... His precious chosen ones. And, the Lord tells us, that if the world does not recognize that, there is a reason for it. The reason they don't recognize it is because they don't know the Savior. They can't see who you are in Christ, because they don't know who Christ is. It's like dressing up for Halloween. One year, I dressed up like Evel Knievel . I had a cape, I had

a helmet, and I even had the white jumpsuit with stars down the front. I looked like Evel Knievel. I go to my grandma's house and she had no idea who I was. She thinks I'm an exterminator or something. She didn't know who I was because she didn't know Evel Knievel.

And how is our neighbor to know who we are... Christians... without knowing who Christ is? So, what do we do about it?

First, live like a Christian lives. Live a life of true repentance, asking God's forgiveness for our trespasses. And then, choose not to enter into that sin for which you repent any more. Take a different path. Show who you are by the way you act. It doesn't always mean that the best behaved person is a Christian. However, it does mean you acting like a Christian when you take God's law seriously. So, listen to God's law and keep it.

Second, tell your neighbor about what you believe. That doesn't mean that you have to take your friend or family member aside and explain all the tenets of the Christian faith and have them memorize every part of Luther's Small Catechism. Many believe that they are ill-equipped to be a witness to the faith. You might fear getting into a theological discussion because it might expose an area of knowledge that you might not be confident with. So, what do you do? Let me do the talking. Bring them to church with you. I know all of you have the ability to invite. Do that. Bring them to Bible class. We are beginning a study of the life of Martin Luther today by showing the new Luther documentary that came out at the beginning of this year. It will tell the story of how the faith, the Word of God, is the main thing for the sake of the reformation. So, there is your opportunity to invite. There are many ways to do it.

We are called the Lord's blessed Children and we are given the blessed opportunity to share the good news of the faith. And these men and women that you see listed in your bulletin today have either begun this journey as adopted children through the waters of Holy Baptism, or have finished the race and have been transferred to the church triumphant, are made by God through what He gives to those He loves. And He loves you. And make no mistake about, for those newly baptized, the challenges of living in this misguided world will be numerous. Heartache and pain will define our days. Suffering is a word we Christians use to describe ways of life. The reason: because all Christians suffer and we should expect it. Whether that be because of our sins, the sins of others, or the fallen world around us that presses hardship upon us at every turn, we know it will be a part of our lives.

But we still rejoice, dear brothers and sisters. The victory has been won. The heavenly Father says you are my precious children. And what that means is that we are never outside of His care. In the midst of all that befalls us in this life, our Lord says, "*Never will I leave you and never will I forsake you.*" This is the measure of comfort that children need from their Father. And we are blessed because the Father, our Father, would send His only begotten Son to die for His adopted sons and daughters. Jesus, our brother and our Savior has purchased and won us and we no longer belong to the devil and this world.

The world may not recognize you... because it does not recognize Jesus. Be not discouraged, beloved in the Lord. Show them Jesus. And show them that Jesus loves them too. Jesus has given all that we need and calls us His own. Thanks be to God. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.