

November 6, 2011
1 John 3:1-3

All Saints A
Discipleship: Life as a Saint

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we remember the saints who have gone before us. Today is one of those days that we can give thanks to God for his gift of eternal life. It's a day where we focus on life. We focus on the lives of the faithfully departed. More importantly we focus our eyes on the life of Christ. This year, this All Saints Sunday hits closer to home. Not only have I said good bye to the saints who have gone to the Church Triumphant from this place...Dale, LT, Gordy, and Doug. I also received the news on Thursday that a classmate of mine, a beloved pastor and a friend was Called by God to Worship this All Saints Sunday in heaven.

The Reverend Matthew Peterson lived his life for the sake of the gospel. He knew what this discipleship thing that we have been talking about is all about. I am going to warn you, this story may bring a few tears to your eyes. Shortly before we began our fourth year of school, Matt was diagnosed with cancer – multiple myeloma. Unfortunately Matt was one of those guys that was a deferred vicar...meaning that he finished his class work before Vicarage, so when I returned from vicarage he was completing his last year of studies on his vicarage at his home church in Illinois. As a community at the seminary we prayed for Matt every day in our chapel services. Matt was one of those guys that everyone loved. Knowing that he was struggling with this dreadful disease was hard. Matt didn't know what he wanted to do for a career...he first was a police officer...then he became an investment counselor...but he was not content...he finally entered the seminary and flourished...he was where he was supposed to be. Both him and his family were supposed to go into the ministry.

It is what his calling would be. After Matt was diagnosed with Cancer his Facebook page was not all dismal and downtrodden. His Facebook page was full of joy. Really he rejoiced in his suffering. He was one that lived his life as a saint, as a disciple of Christ, first and foremost because God said, "I Love You!" While he was in the hospital I would read his Facebook updates and his caring bridge updates and would see that even while there he was sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone...doctors, nurses, and other patients. Matt was one of those guys that I looked up too. In 2010 when we graduated from the Seminary...Matt was there for Call Day...Matt was there for graduation. What a joy it was to have him there to celebrate with him. Matt was able to do what he loved to do. Share the gospel of Jesus Christ till the day he died. You know, I am not preaching a funeral sermon for my friend, classmate and fellow pastor. I am sharing this with you on All Saints Day, because Matt lived his life for Jesus in everything that he did and said. Matt not only live his life as a Saint...but Matthew died as a Saint this past Thursday morning.

Matt was called a child of God...our text says...*"See, what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called Children of God and so we are. The reason why the*

world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's Children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

Even as we remember those that have departed this veil of tears...we have to remember the Saints of God that are still alive. Frankly as we live our lives as Saints as Disciples of Christ, the bottom line is this...God is the one whose love for us is beyond human imagination. Our human way of seeing things is different than that of God's. We don't always live our lives as saints...even though we are saints because God said, "I love you!" We don't always live as disciples. Sometimes we come about and we say "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth". One should pay for one's wrongdoing. We seek revenge and vengeance. We seek to see that one's punishment fits his crime. We fall into a vicious cycle...we want to depend on ourselves, we want to make up for what we have done wrong...and sometimes it's not that. Sometimes we ignore our sins; we ignore our shortcomings in life. When that happens we find ourselves sinking down even more deeply.

We are called Children of God because our Father loves us so much that he calls us Children. We are also called Saints. What is your viewpoint of a saint? Is your view of saint one that lives a perfect life...that achieves spectacular things? Sometimes it is...but the Bible tells us something different. Saints are not perfect, saints can't really achieve spectacular things on their own. But yet the Scriptures tell us that Saints are vital for the Christian faith. Without the saints, the men and women that God chooses to work through, there would only be Jesus...but no followers of Jesus.

Jesus though is the center of our faith. He is the center of our lives as the church. Or could I say....He should be the center of our lives as a church. A good way to see if your life as a disciple is off kilter, when your life is off center is when you see Jesus is no longer the foundation of everything you do.

Where is your life today? Where is your foundation? Is your foundation Jesus Christ and the life that he calls you to live out? Is everything you do centered around Jesus Christ? The obvious answer is no...because we are sinners. Do you live out your Father's will? Do you do as he tells you? Where do your commitments lie? Do they lie in your church and with your Savior? Or do they lie elsewhere...at your school, at your job, on the football field, in the weight room, in the field and the woods, on the lake or in the camper...or what about with St. Mattress.

You know, no saint that has ever walked the this road called life, lived their life perfectly. God knows that...God knows. And because he knows...he sent the only one that could live a perfect life to this earth and that he was His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He sent his perfect Son, to live a perfect life, to die an agonizing death, and to live a perfect and restored life again. Jesus Christ lives for you.

You see being a Saint today has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with Jesus Christ. It doesn't start with what you do. It starts with God saying, "I Love you, you are mine...I CHOSE YOU! You Cannot choose me!" It starts with God saying...I choose you to live your life for me.

How did this first start for you...for many of you it was when some guy in a white robed held you in his arms and poured water over your heads and said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." Others of you it was when someone shared to you this message of life which led you to the waters of baptism.

How do you experience it now...You experience it when you worship with others, when you read and hear his Word? When you share God's word with others. You experience it when someone is there to help you in time of need. You experience when you love others without grumbling or complaining. Being a saint relies on God and being exposed to his love.

Last week we looked at Martin Luther and how God used his Word to change his life and reveal the truth. Martin Luther through that stated that We are simultaneously saints and sinners. Sinners because of what we do...Saints because of What God did and continues to do in your life.

Saints because God helps us to grow as his children.

The Holy Scriptures share with us how we are to live as Saints. In our first reading from today we hear how as saints we come to worship God with others...from all walks of life, all nations and tribes and tongues. Worshipping because they acknowledge their Salvation comes only from God.

In our sermon text we read how saints are children of God. God treats his saints as a loving father treats his children. We also recognize that the world may not know us for who we are, because they do not know him...but also because we don't live our lives as Saints.

In 2 Corinthians Paul writes how as Saints we are encouraged to give generously of everything the Lord has given us. We are also encouraged to be cheerful givers of our time, money, material goods, and skills. TO give without complaining...to give without demanding recognition, without expecting others to give. When we do this we are in fact sharing God's love.

And in our gospel lesson for today from Matthew 5 we hear Jesus' own words describing saints.

Each of us have been impacted by Saints...saints that are still alive and saints that have departed this life. Each of us have been impacted by Saints...saints who are influenced

by God...for me one of those saints was my fellow brother in the ministry, Matthew Peterson, and one of his updates on his Facebook page over a year ago was this...

"Don't worry about my body, my clothes, house or food. I cannot even add one hour to my life, not even one second. My concern is the Father's concern, which is to share Jesus Christ, the Son of God with others. My mission is clear and I don't have time to get distracted. God, please help me to work while it is still day, for the night approaches, when no one can work." September 1, 2010 10:30pm

I pray we could all have this attitude as fellow saints in the kingdom of God. Today we continue to remember all those saints that are resting now from their earthly labors and will one day when the Lord Returns in power and glory will raise up all people and take His Saints, his Children to our eternal home with Him forever.

May God grant you peace and love and comfort on this All Saints Sunday. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.