

[Revelation 7:9-17](#)

[Psalms 34:1-10, 22](#)

[1 John 3:1-3](#)

[Matthew 5:1-12](#)

## All Saints, Elections, and Stewardship... Oh my!

- This is simply an incredible Sunday, is it not? So many things happening all at once
  - And I did not even mention the pandemic, the coming Winter, or Thanksgiving and Christmas,
  - Because even in the Wizard of Oz, they only had three things that scared them as they walked through the scary the forest, right?!
    - We have a few more these days
  - And what a commentary on just how much we are dealing with as a people and nation right now.
  - Here is what I want you to take away from this sermon today- maybe I shouldn't give away the ending already, but it's important
  - God has brought us through worse things than this- plagues, wars, political turmoil, upheaval, and natural disasters
  - And God will do so again
  - We also know how it all is going to end- we know about God's victory, and we will get to hear it again as we talk about All Saints
  - And through it all, through these promises, we also know God is calling us up out of the fray
  - Calling us to a deep peace that the world cannot understand nor replicate
  - Calling us to work while the storm rages around us to leave the world in a slightly better place than when we entered it.
  - To leave our spiritual inheritance or legacy, as we discussed last week.
  - And God will help us do that.
  - And I guess I could end the sermon there, but we have so much good stuff left to discuss!
  - I want to tell you why I believe it!
- Perhaps we begin with All Saints Day, as it is one of the principle feasts of the Episcopal Church

- And has been for many centuries, although it has changed so much over time
- Initially a Catholic Feast day, All Saints celebrated those who had died and were now in heaven<sup>1</sup>
- While All Souls mourned and prayed for the poor souls in Purgatory
- It was originally celebrated in May, and probably became the Christian version of a Pagan holiday already celebrated at that time
- You probably are aware that as people converted to Christianity, they often brought with them their traditions from before
- And these traditions would mingle, and take on slightly different meanings and such
- Scholars suspect that All Saints and All Souls picked up on ancient Roman celebrations around the same time in May
- When they tried to exorcise the malevolent and fearful ghosts of the dead from their homes by offering them beans<sup>2</sup>
- It's amazing how culture and religion evolve- and continue to do so
- At the Reformation, the Protestants did away with the doctrine of Purgatory because there was no Scriptural basis for it
  - And they threw out much of the doctrine around sainthood: no more praying to saints, no more saints interceding on our behalf
  - And no more All Souls either
- Today, as we have inherited our Anglican tradition, some of that history and tradition come to us, and we have reinvented it to meet our own needs
- In modern times, All Hallow's Eve, the night before All Saints, we laugh and mock death,
  - And are playful with the memories and spirits of those before us dressing up in costumes and eating candy
- All Saints Day being the celebration of those who have been granted official "Sainthood" and are good examples of the faith
  - Such as St. Vincent<sup>3</sup>, whose relic resides in our altar, and what we get out each year bless, either with incense or a prayer
  - St. Vincent was a deacon who was arrested in Spain during the Roman prosecutions
  - He refused to burn the Scriptures, so he was subjected to every kind of torture they could think of, eventually making him a martyr

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_Souls%27\\_Day#Background](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Souls%27_Day#Background)

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemuria\\_\(festival\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemuria_(festival))

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent\\_of\\_Saragossa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_of_Saragossa)

- Speaking of deacons... Tim!
- So All Hallows Eve, All Saints Day- and tomorrow we celebrate All Souls, or the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed
  - The mourning and remembering of the ones we have loved and lost who may not be known as proper Saints, but who are saints to us.
- It has always felt to me like this weekend, these three services, lead us through a liturgical grief process of sorts
- Denial of death and mocking it as though we are immune
- Celebrating the saints who have gone before us, but keeping our own mortality at arms length
- And finally, at All Souls, coming to grief and acceptance of our own death and the ones whom we love
- And most importantly, that God's love and promise carry us through each of those stages, and is waiting for us on the other side.
- And that like those who have gone before, we are called by God live a life of faith, hope, and love
- And to pass that on to others when it is our time- to leave it better than when we found it
- What are the ways we can do that this year? Right now?
  - Let's talk politics! :)
  - It's a game now... I love the immediate and visceral reaction when I mention that from the pulpit
  - But really, Tuesday is election day, and if you have not already voted by mail or by early voting
  - Vote.
  - We all know that it is a patriotic duty, a gift from the founders of our country that we the people still get to decide what kind of country we have
  - We get to elect the people we think will lead us best, and will make the best decisions not just for us individually, but for every citizen
    - And even for our country on the international scene
  - It is an amazing gift- one I think we can take for granted, as few of us have ever witnessed a government that does not have to listen to its people
    - As our founding fathers did
  - And as Christians, it is simply a great opportunity to live out our lives as "saints", as people of faith, to vote in ways that shape this country
    - Shape it into something God would be proud of
    - Something better than it was before

- And while we are thinking, praying, and voting on candidates and issues on a national scale
  - Let us also not forget the local, the parish, St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Barrington
  - It too needs your help- we need you to help to make sure this place is in better shape next year than it was before
  - Next Sunday, our stewardship campaign culminates with our guest preacher, The Rev. Byran Cones
  - Much like voting, our giving also helps create and shape this church, and empower it to do God's work right here in Barrington
  - Now this year is certainly a strange one for church life- and by strange I mean really really really hard
  - Just today we had to decrease our size down to 25 maximum in-person attendance!
  - There are few years like this where the church needs your help this much to continue and minister to parishioners and our community
  - Where who we will be on the other side of this pandemic is directly affected by this year's stewardship season
    - And what the budget is able to accomplish next year
  - You know this, because we remind you each year, but St. Michael's depends mostly on its pledge and offering to do its work
  - 89% of the income on the financial statement is from you
  - 89% depends upon you, which is high enough for me to say this year- you will determine the shape of this church directly, just like voting
  - You do that here by attending, volunteering, and giving
  - We are still giving 10% of our income goes to the Diocese for work in the greater area
  - And 10% goes to Outreach, this year with a focus on feeding ministries
  - Even with the cutbacks this year, we are still committed to those 10%
  - You can learn more about this in the Zoom cottage meetings, or on the video we will release later this week
  - The time we give, the money we give, the emotional and spiritual investment that we give into this parish, creates it
  - It's not the building, it's us- we are St. Michael's
  - Just like we are the United States of America
  - And we are the Saints of God
  - So few Sundays are like this, in that they speak to the complexity of what it means to be a Christian in the 21st century so clearly
- And at each of these levels, regardless of the stresses, anxieties, and troubles that we experience

- We can choose to leave it better than when we found it
- Better, as in closer to what God would want us to do
- Guiding is today in our Gospel is none other than the Beatitudes, Jesus's in inaugural sermon on what is that is blessed by God
- Now these statements are not goals for us- this is not how we go about getting blessed by God<sup>4</sup>
  - We do not strive to be persecuted, mourn, or be poor and broken in spirit
- These are statements of truth- Jesus is blessing people who find themselves in these harshest of places physically, spiritually, and emotionally
- The down and out, those at the end of their ropes, those with no where to turn, and where stress and danger are around every corner
- Maybe we all feel that way at times, and maybe on this day of convergence we feel it in several ways
- These beatitudes proclaim God's good news that God shows up when we least expect it, and blesses us
- God will bring you through this too, whatever it may be,
- Be it elections, stewardship, pandemics, or winter
- Because you are beloved children of God, because God shows up in the darkest of times and places and blesses you
- Because God has done that over and over throughout the lives of the Saints, and God will do it for you too
- And then we can imitate God and be a blessing to others who find themselves in dark places
- We can leave things better than we found them.
- My friends, those few who are able to come now in person, and those of you listening at home, and maybe even later on the video or podcast
  - There is a lot happening right now
  - Perhaps you are worried, stressed, anxious, depressed, grieving, or brokenhearted
  - I think in some ways we all are
  - Remember- it is in those times that Jesus says we are blessed
  - It is then that God shows up, and come what may walks with us through it all
  - Because at the end of the day, at the real point of every sermon, is that God loved us so much that we are called children of God

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1542>

- And nothing can separate us from the love of God- not hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword
- neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation- nothing can stop God's love.
- One day after our life here is over, we will go on to meet the Saints who have gone before
  - And see God as he is, face to face, clearly.
- Until then, let's leave it better than we found it.
- Be the blessing that Jesus gives a hurting world.

Amen.