

Remember your Baptism!

Sermon 2017-11-05 - Year A - All Saints Sunday - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas

Revelation 7:9–17; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11–23; Matthew 5:1–12

All Saints Day, Halloween, and the Beginning of the Reformation

- This week we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Specifically remembering the day on which Luther is said to have posted his 95 theses to the doors of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg Germany.
- There were many falsehoods and abuses in the Roman Catholic Church on the eve of the Reformation, but the straw that broke the camel's back was the sale of indulgences which were grants by the Pope of remission of the temporal punishment in purgatory still due for sins after absolution.
- In Luther's day, indulgences were being sold to fund the building of St. Peter's Basilica.
- Johann Tetzel, a German Dominican Friar and Preacher who sold indulgences at the time of Luther. Credited with composing the rhyme: "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings the soul from purgatory springs."
- Luther rightly saw many biblical issues with the sale of indulgences, especially that it preyed upon the poor and that it promoted the idea that one could be saved through works (such as purchasing an indulgence) rather than by the grace of Christ.
- 95 Theses had much to say about the falsehood of indulgences.
 - 32. Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.
 - 36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.
 - 37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God, even without indulgence letters.
 - 50. Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.¹
- Luther posted this document with the intention of starting a healthy conversation about indulgences, not to split the church. But it didn't go as he had planned.
- Why did Luther choose the eve of All Saints day to post his theses? We don't know.
 - It may also have had something to do with another celebration, All Souls Day, when people would pray for the souls of those who were stuck in purgatory.
 - All Saints' Day is a day to celebrate the victory of Christ over the powers of darkness.
 - Various accounts of the origins of Trick or Treating exist, but one is the idea that children would dress up as the devil, or a goblin, or a witch as a way to mock the devil.

¹ Quotes from Luther's 95 Theses are taken from <http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>

- Luther once said “The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of Scripture, is to jeer and flout him for he cannot bear scorn.”²
- Luther saw the false teaching of the church as an evil which needed to experience the victory of Christ. And so he fearlessly spoke up and confronted the church leaders of his day.

For all the Saints

- In Revelation 7 we see a powerful picture of the saints of God gathered around the throne of the Lamb to sing his praises. This the end which we all hope for as Christians.
- On All Saints day we recognize all the saints who have gone before us, those we know, and the countless others whom we don't know.
- Saints cheer us on - Heb 12:1-2 - Cloud of witnesses.
- Saints give us an example to follow - 1 Cor 11:1 - “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”
- Saints remind us that we are saints too. *Hagios*. Holy Ones. Eph 1:1
 - We are numbered among the saints not because of what we have done, but because of what Christ has done for us. Eph 2:4-9.
 - *I sing a song of the saints of God.* “3 They lived not only in ages past; there are hundreds of thousands still; the world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will. You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea; for the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too.”

Remember your Baptism

- But what about when we don't feel like saints?
- “When [Luther] was tempted, in doubt, depression, or near-despair, he would remind himself: *baptizatus sum*, “I am baptized,” and recognize a change.”³
- Baptism is a defining moment in our lives. It is the outward and visible sign that we have received the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and have been saved from sin and death.
- Baptism is our entrance into the church, the ark of Christ's salvation. Location of the font near the entrance to the church
- In baptism we are adopted into the family of God and made heirs of his promises, including the promise that we can take our place alongside those who worship around the throne of the lamb (Rev 7).
- In Baptism we turn away from the world, the flesh, and the devil and we embrace Christ, believing the whole of the Gospel and committing to live obedient lives.
- 44] Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: Nevertheless I am baptized; but if I am baptized, it is promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.⁴
- Renewal of Baptismal Covenant

² Lewis, C. S. *Screwtape Letters*.

³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-86/luther-daily-gift-of-new-life.html>

⁴ Luther's Large Catechism - <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-6-baptism.php>