

For All the Saints

2018-11-04 - All Saints' Day - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas

Sirach 44:1–14; Psalm 149; Revelation 7:9–17; Matthew 5:1–12

- When I was a boy, I lived in England with my Father for about three months while he was filling in for a priest who was on Sabbatical.
- During that time we visited countless cathedrals and old medieval churches.
- I remember Canterbury Cathedral and standing in the place where St. Thomas Becket was murdered because he stood up to the king and defended the Church.
- I remember walking through the ruins of the Abbey which was started by St. Augustine of Canterbury when he first brought the faith to the British Isles as a missionary.
- And I remember standing in a church in front of the grave of some saint, whose name I can't remember right now, and seeing a lead box in the shape of a heart that supposedly contained this saint's heart, and I remember thinking, "that's really gross!"
- Today is All Saints' Sunday, a day when we remember and celebrate all the saints who have gone before us. But as we do so, it is a good idea to ask "why"?

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

- Sirach 44:1 "Let us now praise famous men..."
- One of the biggest reasons to remember the saints is that they inspire us and give us an example to follow.
- "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" 1 Corinthians 11:1
- We don't worship these saints, but we do honor them and thank God for them.

They Lived not only in Ages Past

- We tend to use the word "saint" in different ways. The first, and most common, is in the sense in which we have been speaking up to this point. Thinking of saints as exceptional Christians whose stories live on through the ages.
- The way in which the Bible uses this word, however, simply means "holy ones." This is how Paul addresses many of his letters, "to the saints who are in..."
 - In this sense, the saints are all those who have put their faith in Christ and are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- While there are many saints who are honored year after year on particular feast days, there are countless others who are remembered by few, if by anyone.
- Who are some of the saints who have had an influence on your life? Who are the saints who first introduced you to the Lord and helped you to become a saint? Are these saints still living, or have some gone to be with the Lord?
- I know that many of you have lost dear Saints in your lives this year.
- All Saints' day gives us an opportunity to remember these saints too.
- While we struggle with holiness in this life, those saints who have gone to be with the Lord have been made perfectly holy.

- Our passage from Revelation gives us a picture of what life looks like to those saints who have gone before us. Revelation 7:9-10.
- There was a concept among the Celtic Christians called “thin places” or places where the separation between us and God is particularly thin.
 - Truly, we can experience God anytime and anywhere, as the Lord is always present, but sometimes our awareness of his presence is dim.
 - The Eucharist is truly a time when the veil between heaven and earth is very thin, because when we gather around the Altar (which is a symbol of the throne of the Lamb), we are joining with “angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.” With all the saints who have gone before us.
- So another reason to celebrate All Saint’s day is to remember that we are a part of the “communion of saints” which we refer to every time we say the creed.

I Mean to be One Too - Already But Not Yet

- One of the fascinating things about this salvation story that we find ourselves in is the “Already but not yet” principle. Most often we use this phrase to talk about the Kingdom of God, but we can apply the same idea to our own sainthood.
- As follows of Christ, we are now saints, holy ones, cleansed by repentance and the water of Baptism, but not yet in the fullness of the holiness towards which we are called.
- In the Beatitudes, which we read this morning, Jesus gives us a vision of the holiness into which we are called.
 - The word Jesus uses over and over is “Makarios” which means “Blessed, Happy, or Fortunate”
- As we think about the saints, both the famous ones as well as the less famous, these words from Jesus are the kinds of words we would use to describe these saints.
- Certainly, these are some of the characteristics which we should strive to emulate ourselves.
- But be warned, no amount of human striving will earn you a place standing with the saints around the throne of the lamb. We strive out of thanksgiving for what God has done for us through Jesus Christ, but it is faith in Christ alone that saves us.
 - This is why we must remember one last beatitude, not from Matthew, but from Revelation.
 - Revelation 14:12-13 - “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...”
- Let us rejoice in the saints who have gone before us and now rest from their labor. Let us celebrate their examples of holiness, but most of all let us share in the faith that they have in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!