

All Saints' Sunday

November 3, 2019

Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18

Daniel's vision

Ephesians 1:11-23

Spiritual Blessings of the Saints

Luke 6:20-31

Beatitudes, Love enemies, Turn other cheek, Golden Rule

In the 700's Pope Gregory III set this Feast Day at November 1st, or the following Sunday. Recognizing today as All Saints' Sunday is an optional observance on our church's liturgical calendar. We could choose to still have green vestments and hangings, and this would just be the 21st Sunday after Pentecost, part of the long green season in the church. In most protestant churches, this day goes quietly unnoticed. But to me it is one of the most important and meaningful services of the year. And so we use the liturgical color white – the color used to honor saints; and our music and lessons and prayers today focus on those who have come before us.

The label of 'saint' has more than one meaning in scripture. Saints were those people in the early church who refused to worship the emperor as a god, and paid for their allegiance to Jesus with their lives. The title 'saint' is also used to describe people in the early church who were persecuted but not killed, first called 'confessors'. 'Saint' is also used for all believers in Jesus (their faith known to us or not known to us), both those who have passed on, and those who are still alive.

Under this broad category of 'saint', then, there are lots of relationships that can come to our minds. I invite you to reflect on the relationships that **have** helped to form you; and the relationships that **continue** to form you.

In your own lifetime;

Your parents (intentionally carrying some things forward, and intentionally not carrying other things forward – large family, 'Now I lay me down to sleep'.),

Siblings (how to be the oldest), teachers,

Coaches (my wrestling coach-being pinned, hearing his voice from across the gym-learning to think clearly under non-ideal conditions),

Scout leaders, band leaders, bosses, co-workers, best friends,

Enemies (Christ teaches us: learn how to forgive), Sunday School teachers, pastors, priests,

Nuns (Tom Pomeroy used to tell me about his teacher Sister Leoba 50 years later like it was yesterday-not fondly-she kept him accountable).

There are also relationships we build through study: The line of clergy in Apostolic succession back to the disciples. (Bp elect Lucinda talked about the number she will be assigned at her consecration on January 11, 2020).

2,000 years of followers of Jesus Christ; another 3,500 years before that of Jews worshipping Yahweh. Abraham, Moses, David, the Disciples, Paul
Believers in our Christian tradition who have devoted their lives to learning the heart of God. (Books of the Saints)

Augustine – life in balance – study, prayer, work, rest

St Francis – holy poverty

Catherine of Siena – worship of Jesus, and love for Jesus

Brother Lawrence – recognizing the presence of God in ALL THINGS

On this day we honor all those people, all those relationships, recent or in the distant past, who have contributed to shaping us and challenging us to be all that God meant for us to be.

Paul explains in today's epistle lesson that God's plan is to bring everything in the universe together under Jesus. We have all been made into one body, the church. So by following Jesus, you and I are automatically part of that body, that spiritual church. You and I are part of God's plan. Our relationships are part of God's plan. We are interconnected through the Spirit with every other person who has ever had a mustard seed worth of faith in God.

Today, All Saints' Day, we honor the faithful men and women through the ages who have died because they were not willing to compromise or recant their faith; and today we thank God for the ordinary, everyday people who have made themselves available for God to work through them.

We give honor to the people who have encouraged us, educated us in the beliefs we hold, and modeled for us the life God calls us to live. Praise God for the work they have accomplished in your life already, and praise God for the work these people continue to accomplish through you. May you especially think of them today.

Amen.