

All Saints Day Sermon
Isaiah 25: 6-9 - Revelation 21:1-6a
Oct. 31, 2021
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All Saints Day is actually tomorrow. Obviously, today is a different holiday, a day that has its roots in the Celtic culture. Halloween, or All Hallows Eve, is a day that the druids lifted up to rid the land of evil spirits they believed roamed the forests and wreaked havoc. To ward them off, they would carve out scary faces on pumpkins and light a candle, and if they traveled out at night, they would dress up as scary creatures themselves so as not to invite evil spirits to come into them.

The church did not try to do away with this tradition in Ireland when Christianity was introduced. However, it did seek to resolve the concern by acknowledging evil spirits do lurk within our midst, but that when Christ came into the world and gave his life, there was an answer to those lurking evil spirits, that at the end of a long, dark night when evil spirits roamed, God's goodness would still come in the morning. And so, All Saints Day was formed to be an answer to the question of evil. Goodness still prevails, and those saints are the ones who have answered God's call to live and serve in Christ's name.

All Saints Day is a day that we take time to reflect on our past, to remember those who have gone before us on this journey of faith, those who now live on in the full presence of God in the communion of all saints.

Well, who are those saints? Are they people who have done profound things which history has recorded either in the bible or the history books now studied by children and adults alike? Well, yes, it does most certainly include people like John the Baptist, the disciples, Mary, Lydia, and so many others we read about in our bibles. And also people like John Wesley, Martin Luther and Martin Luther King, St Francis of Assisi, Mother Teresa.

But it is not just those who have done tremendous things to bring the good news of Christ to bear and change the lives of so many in such notable fashion. Still, it also includes the ones who, in Jesus' name, simply offered a cup of cold water to a stranger, gave a helping hand to a person or family in need. In essence, they are those whom you have chosen to remember with a picture or a token of remembrance and so many others you brought only in your heart. They also include us when we are actively engaged in the ministry of Jesus Christ. What is ministry? It is the act of sharing and telling the love of God.

Saints are those who, without much or any recognition at all, illustrated and ignited the passion of Christ and the message of the gospel in their daily lives. They are those who strove to build up the church, not the building but the community of faith, so that it may continue to carry out its constant mission, to make the message of salvation known to the whole world. To bring good news to the poor, hope to the hopeless,

The purpose of any church built up in Jesus' name has always been to share with fellow sinners the wonderful news of forgiveness and to invite them on the same journey of faith. It is so that all may share in that heavenly feast that will be prepared for us, and the day of death and tears as well as war and strife, violence spurred by greed, will be no more.

Of course, no saint is entirely perfect, but all saints, having given their lives to Christ, have been called to grow in perfection of love towards Christ and neighbor. The best way to ensure that this growth happens is to have a place where the community of believers can gather to worship and pray and carry out this mission of reaching others.

White Stone UMC is here today because there have been many in our past who have helped to build this church, again not so much the building, but rather that which it houses, a place of worship, a place for Christian education and spiritual formation, a safe haven for children to come to Jesus, in all of their playful form and eagerness to do.

This morning we lift the names of those saints entering into God's glory in the past year who did much to help build this church in the past that it may be here today. Let us give thanks to God for these persons who now rest from their labors as we hear their names.

Read Names

This is not to glorify any person, only God. It is hoped, however, that as we reflect on those we knew, those saints will further inspire us not so much to preserve our past but to continue to envision the future of Christ's work here at White Stone United Methodist Church and to bring the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the generations still to come.

For in the days of Isaiah, he writes, "On this mountain, the Lord of Hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, well-aged wines strained clear.

And John, in his revelation, writes, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea (the void that separated the two was no more. And God himself will make his home among mortals. He will dwell with them, and they will be his peoples. There will be no more pain and no more crying, for the first things will have passed away. Behold say's God; I am making all things new.

Let us recognize and remember all of our saint's past and present and commit to joining them in the work to bring the good news to the poor as they continue to pray for us and encourage us through the Holy Spirit. And let us also recommit ourselves to making this journey of faith, being sanctified by grace, learning as we go, from those who have blazed a trail before us and also from paths unforeseen, that no matter where we find ourselves, whether, in a pandemic or an unseasonable climate of change, we always know that God is with us, spurring us to continue to the good work, that our ancestors in faith started so long ago.