

Home Service for 11/1/2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we are worshipping in our church building again, some have health reasons that makes it impossible to do so. Others are worried about those who need them with health issues. We want everyone to be comfortable and to be able to worship so the home services will continue so all may be able to worship Our Heavenly God where ever they are. You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship, just like we are doing in the church building.

Today is All Saints Day, a day to remember the saints that have gone before us and day to remember the saints who walk beside us on our journey of faith.

All-Saints Sunday Prayer

Most loving God, you have given us a great multitude of witnesses whose lives have testified to the amazing power of your Son's resurrection. By your presence among us, teach us the truth of life everlasting. Through this day for remembrance of those who have gone before us, grant us inspiration to run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Keep us on the way of truth until we, too, join in endless celebration with all your saints in splendor. In the name of Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Call to Worship:

As we gather, we remember that we are not alone! We gather with the saints, who live in the presence of God, singing praises to the God of our salvation. From every nation, race, clan and culture, God's people gather to worship the One-Who-Is-Without -Peer! To God and to the Lamb, all honor, Gloria, wisdom, thanksgiving, strength and power. Blessed be God, now and forever! Amen!

Opening Prayer:

We seek and find you in Creation, O God, in the world you have made and the people you have called. Your vulnerable, powerful Lamb is our shepherd and guide, leading us to share the shelter of your abundant life. Let us recognize you here in the beauty of this morning and in its challenge; may the Risen One, your Shepherd-Lamb, lead us to act for your justice and peace: so that all may drink from your springs of the waters of life, and find their tears of sorrow and pain wiped away. In the name of the Risen One we pray: Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we so often fail to remember how profoundly you love us. You bless us even when we are at our wit's end. You created us, and you love us as we are, even as you inspire our desire to be better through your Holy Spirit. Forgive us when we fail to remember that we are the body of Christ, saints-in-process. Empower us to begin anew, encouraged by the stories of those who live in your eternal presence. In the name of Jesus, and for the sake of the gospel, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Beloved, we are the children of God. Don't fear failure. It is endemic to our human nature. Learn from your mistakes, and cherish the forgiving grace of God. Give thanks for all you are, and go forward in faith, knowing that God is faithful.

Read Psalm 34:1-10, 22

I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
²I will glory in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
³Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.
⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
⁵Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
⁶This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.

⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

⁹ Fear the LORD, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

²² The LORD will rescue his servants;
no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned.

Prayers of the People:

Our hearts are filled, O Lord, with your joy and peace. You have placed your imprint on us and challenged us to be your people in thought, word and deed. In gratitude we come to you this day, bringing shouts of joy as well as cries of sorrow. We are concerned about so many of our friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, who are afflicted with illness of many kinds, who mourn, who feel lost and alone and wonder where you are. We raise their names before you in prayer that your healing love may be poured on them.

[Here prayers of concern may be offered].

Lord, we know that you hear and respond to our prayers for these dear ones. Likewise, gracious God, we shout with joy at the many blessings that have been poured into our lives and into the lives of our family and friends. Our hearts rejoice at the delight they feel. Help us to understand that these blessings your wondrous gifts of joy for each one of us. We lift the names and situations which reveal to us your loving presence with us.

[Here prayers of joy can be lifted].

We thank you for all these blessings. Help us to bring words of healing and hope to all we meet, for it is in Jesus' name that we pray. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: “Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.” And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ ‘Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,’ nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; ‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’ ‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 John 3:1-13

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, ^[a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. ⁵ But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶ No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son

of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. ⁹ No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. ¹⁰ This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. ¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, ^[b] if the world hates you.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 5:1-12

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Message

As I mentioned at the beginning of the service, today is All Saints Day. It is not a day of mourning the dead, but a day of celebrating the life we have in Christ and a chance to look ahead at the joys before us!

As the Gospel was read I hope you recognize the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. These are the blessings of Jesus. They were and are not good news for those who are self-satisfied and self-righteous. As an example the Pharisees, who were wealthy, successful, powerful, and religious. They thought the coming of the Kingdom of God would surely bring them happiness, and that God would surely reward them for being such good people. But they were not really righteous in God's eyes, they were self-centered and could not see past their own piety. These blessings are good news for believers who have a bad taste in their mouths from all the wicked, evil ways of the world, and are longing for something better; for something which brings hope into their lives.

Jesus turns the world upside down in these blessing. He gives to those who the world sees as losers the hand of his grace and to those who are so called winners he gives a wakeup call to their false righteousness. These famous Beatitudes are a clear description of the faithful as they live in this world, and clear descriptions of the saints of this world.

But this morning we are going to look at saints we have journeyed with in the past, saints we journey with now in the present moment, and then, the hope all the saints have for the future.

The saints we recall in our past, the ones who have found their eternal rest. We remember their faith and the fact that our fellowship is a communion of eternal life. Those members of this community remain part of it, even after death. It is from these saints that our heritage of faith has been passed on. It is from these saints the time honored values, which have been passed on, are brought to present. It is from these saints we can draw courage and strength as we remember their lives, their actions, their relationship with us. As we reflect back over our lives, we recall many saints, even loved ones, who though they are now resting in another land, still keep a relationship alive within us. Maybe it is a husband's memory or a child's memory, or a father's memory, or a grandparent's memory which on this day tugs at the heart strings of our lives. Whatever it is, it is good to ponder to reflect, to relive those special moments.

On this All Saints day it is good to allow those special thoughts of a loved one to surface, to be relived, to be cherished once again. As we confess in the Apostle Creed, "I believe in the communion of saints" there is a relationship with the past saints which affect our present in a good and healthy way. The lives of those past saints do affect us today. It is good to recall their influence, their friendship, the bonds that link us to them and to the past.

The friendships of the past saints lead us into the relationships we have now in the present moment. For the present moment is also made up of the community of the faithful believers who share with one another their trust, their belief, their acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives. And in this present moment, Christ comes to each of us to give us the power, the courage, the strength, the confidence, the Holy Spirit to continue our journey faithfully in Him and in service to our neighbor. Saints on the faith journey today can be a faithful witness to their faith and belief in Christ for other brothers and sisters. We gather together in a community of faithful believers because it is from our mutual witness that our faith remains strong and alive. We draw courage and faith, confidence and trust, strength and fortitude from each other and the Lord to allow us to be His witnesses in this world for the faithful and non-faithful.

We need each other in this present community to give us the strength and the assurance that our faith can be strong in spite of the many challenges to that faith from the world and those around us who don't understand our faith. Can you see that being in community with another, being a witness, being a saint for another saint is what the body of Christ, the church, is all about. Being able to be and walk with another down their path without wanting to direct or lead that person is our calling in the body of Christ. Being able to share with another their burdens without making it your own, being able to comfort another with our witness of action as well as the word is what the priesthood of saints is all about. The present moment as we celebrate this All Saints Day is a time for each of us to turn to our brother and sister in Christ to give them strength, courage, comfort and confidence as they walk their journey of faith.

As our journey in faith continues, this all Saints Day reminds us again that each step we take toward the future is another step closer to our death, and the eternal life which God has promised all who believe in His Son. Our hope and promise for the future is that there is life beyond this one. Jesus says; "I am the Resurrection and the life, he who believe in me shall never die." We hold onto that promise each day we live not knowing whether tomorrow will come for us. Each day we

live, we live in the joy and the hope of eternal life. As saints, those who have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb of God with his broken body, we live with the conviction, the assurance and the hope that there is life for us after this one. So each day is lived for the Lord and in the Lord because we don't know where we will be tomorrow. As we journey with the past saints in our memories and the present saints besides us, we live in Christ and for Christ so that tomorrow we might be in Christ and resting in our heavenly home if the sting of death should take us away from this journey.

The saints of old give us courage as we relive their past memories as we continue to walk with the present saints who walk step by step with us toward the time when we will join all the heavenly saints in praise and thanksgiving to God and His Son for the redemption which is ours. Amen.

Benediction:

Go with the blessings of the one who understands our trials and tribulations. God with the blessings of the cornerstone of our faith. Amen.