All Saints Sunday – November 3rd, 2024

Introduction to the Day

Jesus states the core of God’s law: love God with all you are and have, and love your neighbor as yourself. The scribe agrees that Jesus has rightly identified the most important commandments, much more important than sacrifices. Isaiah and Revelation look forward to the day when God will wipe away all tears; On All Saints Day we celebrate the victory won for all the faithful dead, but we grieve for our beloved dead as well, knowing that God honors our tears. We bring our grief to the table and find there a foretaste of Isaiah’s feast to come.

**Greeting – The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

And also with you.

**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,

our refuge,

our delight,

our beginning and our end.

**Amen.**

Let us come in truth before the one who loves us

and has freed us from our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Eternal One, robed in majesty and mercy,

**we confess that sin has taken hold of us**

**and we are complicit in its power.**

**We are disturbed in spirit and our hearts cannot rest.**

**Unbind us and set us free.**

**Lead us again to the waters of rebirth,**

**that we may live just and generous lives**

**for the good of your world**

**and the care of our neighbors,**

**following in the servant way of Jesus.**

**Amen.**

These words are trustworthy and true:

Christ bore our sins once, for all, on the cross,

swallowing up death forever.

For his sake, you are ☩ forgiven

and God remembers your sin no more.

Let your heart be glad again,

and rejoice in your salvation.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn “For All the Saints” #422 vss 1, 3, 6, 7**

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

The word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**Reading - Revelation 21:1-6**

1 I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

 “See, the home of God is among mortals.

 He will dwell with them;

 they will be his peoples,

 and God himself will be with them;

 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

 Death will be no more;

 mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

 for the first things have passed away.”

  5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6a Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

The word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Gospel – Mark 12:28-34**

28 One of the scribes came near and heard [Jesus and the Sadducees] disputing with one another, and seeing that [Jesus] answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” 29 Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” 32 Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; 33 and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

The Gospel of Our Lord.

Praise to you, O Chri**st.**

**Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Imagine the scene if you will, Jesus and the Sadducees are disputing with one another. Now, Sadducees are a sect of religious folks who cling tightly to the laws of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible. They strictly adhered to this written law, and because of it struggled with Jesus and his movement if you will, because of what being the Son of Man, and what he had said about resurrecting on the third day, as resurrection was not mentioned in the Torah.

Conversely, and for sake of understanding our challengers of Jesus, Pharisees were a bit more evolved in that they knew and believed the written word and the laws within, but saw them as more of a living organism than a “this is how things are because this is what the words say.”

Jesus, and all that he was about and whom he was for, challenged both of their understanding. So we have Jesus here in a dispute with the Sadducees, Lord knows about what. And a scribe overhears it. And is intrigued by how Jesus responded to the line of questioning he faced in that dispute. So, he sees an opening.

Earlier this week, meeting with Orion Johnson in preparation for his Confirmation Sunday, Orion asked, “Pastor, what is the meaning of life?” If he were to ask Jesus that question I think the exchange would be much like the exchange that Jesus and the Scribe have when the Scribe asks:

“Which commandment is the first of all?”

Jesus surely knew the commandments, and the scribe knows that! But he wanted to hear it. And, see how well Jesus knew it.

Jesus quotes for him the *Shema*, tradition, things that every well versed Jew would know: “‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’” Unequivocally the greatest commandment is to love God with every fiber of your being.”

AND!!! There is an AND! “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is NO GREATER COMMANDMENT THAN THESE!”

Jesus does not say, loving neighbor is just below loving God. Jesus does say that loving God is equal to loving neighbor. You cannot have one without the other. Full stop. You cannot claim to love God with all that you are if you do not have love for your neighbor. That is the commandment. That is the mandate.

The scribe LOVES this response. “You are right! To love God is to love neighbor, and to love neighbor is to love God. Good answer!”

And, of course, the scribe takes it just a step further. For many weeks we have heard Jesus alluding to the importance of caring for the other. All that we have heard in recent weeks is Jesus directly and indirectly calling out those who cling to their status. He has continually reminded us that life is not about earthly possessions or the status that comes with them. Life, as far as Jesus is concerned, is about loving others, and in doing so, loving God.

But is the Scribe who adds to it, referencing everything that we have heard from Jesus over the last few weeks, giving a synopsis of what Jesus is all about. Loving God and loving neighbor is, as the Scribe points out, “much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Again, it isn’t about status. It’s not about the acts that people see you do. It’s not about accolades. It’s about loving God and loving others. What is the meaning of life? Love God with all that you are and love your neighbor. You can’t have one without the other. People of God, that is the meaning of this life that we live.

And, in living according to those two rules, the greatest commandment, you live a saintly life. Yes, today is All Saints Day. It is a day when we reflect on the lives that we have lost in the last year. In doing so, we reflect on the lives they lived and how it is that they lived out this commandment.

We celebrate and honor the Saints this All Saints Sunday reminded that Sainthood is not reserved *just* for death, but is mandated for life.

Loving God and loving neighbor is what it means to live a Saintly Life, and it is a call that we are given in baptism. It is a promise that is bestowed upon us in the marking of the baptismal cross, and is a promise and life that Orion affirms today. It is a promise and life that you all in his, and every other, baptism promise to affirm and support.

And, in doing so, commit to a life being everyday, ordinary Saints. Loving God. And loving people.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

**Hymn of the Day “Shall We Gather at the River” #423**

**Apostle’s Creed**

**Prayers**

Rooted in God’s abundant love for the world, let us pray for our neighbors, the church, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

O God of resurrection, you call us by name and raise us to life. Rouse your church from slumber. Where we have held back in fear or shame, unbind us. Embolden us in our proclamation of your good news, that all may know abundant life. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

O God of creation, you have founded your world on rivers and seas. Preserve fresh water sources (*local bodies of water may be named*) and the creatures who call them home. Heal places of pollution and nourish places of drought. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

O God of the earth, you reign over all nations and peoples. Inspire us with wisdom and discernment as we elect legislators and leaders. May they govern with justice and uphold the dignity of all people. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

O God of heaven, you make your home among mortals. Come alongside those who weep this day. Befriend all who are lonely, encourage those in despair, and heal any who are suffering. We pray especially for Becky, Dawn, *Grady and Jace, Matt, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee.* Abide with your faithful ones in love. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

O God who serves, you set before us a feast of rich food. Sustain our ministries of fellowship and hospitality (*specific ministries may be named*). Strengthen the hands and hearts of all who prepare and serve food for our nourishment. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

O God, Alpha and Omega, we give thanks for your faithful ones who are now at peace with you Bill Kuehn

Betty Grosvold

Verna Gunderson

Irene Krese

Kimberly Lynn

David Gunderson

Mildred Legge

With all your saints, we praise you, for you have swallowed up death forever. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We offer our prayers to you, gracious God, trusting in your boundless love for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Lord Jesus, our portion and our cup,

you offered yourself in love for the world,

and in this meal you nourish us with your life.

Fill us with your abundance,

that we may feed the hungry and welcome the stranger,

trusting in your name.

**Amen.**

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Lord’s Prayer**

Behold, God is making all things new!

Take your place in the new creation.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Faithful God,

you have spread before us a feast of rich food and drink

in the body and blood of your Son.

Now send us out to labor with you,

in service to the world you have made,

and among the people you have made your home,

in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

**Sending**

Go in peace. Encourage one another in Christ!

**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**

And all of Good Shepherd said,

**“AMEN”**

**Sending Hymn “What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine” #774 vss 1, 3**

**Blessing**

The Ancient One, enthroned,

the Crucified One, now risen,

the Indwelling One, poured out,

☩ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

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