

The title for today's message is: **The Faithful Are All Saints**

John said: ***See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God;***

Grace to and peace to you, from God the Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, for all the saints, redeemed by the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, we give you thanks. For all those who have cared for us, nurtured us, shared their faith with us, and gave us an example of discipleship to follow, we give you thanks. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, inspire us to follow their example by passing the mantle of faith on to others. Trusting in the timeless dimension of your redeeming grace and the hope of life eternal in your heavenly kingdom. This we ask, in Christ's holy name. Amen.

I would like to begin by sharing a story with you that I had heard several years ago.

Emily and John had been married for seven years, and Emily was growing increasingly concerned about the way their relationship was going.

She believed that John was becoming less attentive to her, less appreciative of the things she did for him.

Nothing seemed to please him anymore. But Emily kept on trying to gain some expression from John that would reassure her of his love for her.

So, one morning she asked John what he would like for breakfast. He said, "I'll have orange juice, toast, coffee, and two eggs, one fried sunny side up, and the other one scrambled."

Emily hurried into the kitchen and put her best effort into making a breakfast that would evoke some word of recognition from her husband.

She went into the garden and picked fresh flowers for the table. She fixed her hair and put on her prettiest robe.

She graced the table with lighted candles and her best linen. Then she called to the bedroom, "John, your breakfast is ready. Come and eat."

John walked into the dining room and sat down. Emily stood beside him, waiting for the words of appreciation she longed to hear.

John looked at his plate, then looked up at his wife and said, "Emily, you've done it again. You scrambled the wrong egg."

Now I think we can agree that John's response to Emily's breakfast was not exactly what she wanted to hear, nor was it fair.

If John had only said to his wife that he really does, appreciate all that she does for him, It may have given them both an opportunity for growth in their relationship.

And this brings us to the crux of the issue on this day that we celebrate the lives of All Saints.

None of us are perfect. In fact, if we can fail to express our love and appreciation for the persons closest to us in the life that we share together here on earth.

How much easier is it to fail to live our lives in appreciation and love for God, and his gift of redeeming grace that we receive through Christ's death and resurrection.

One of the famous statements of Martin Luther, which has special meaning as we celebrate All Saints Sunday, is that we are, at the same time, both sinners and saints.

Luther realized that being faithful disciples of Christ is always the goal, never the reality, that is as long as we live in this world.

Thus, Martin Luther stated that as a Christian, he daily fought the battle against sin.

That he recognized within himself, day in and day out, aspects of his life that were not as he thought God would desire.

This manifest itself, not only in his lack of respect for God, but also in his relationship with those whom he loved.

But Luther also recognized, day in and day out, that God's grace and forgiveness in Christ's death and resurrection.

Was sufficient to overcome his guilt, that he might stand before God as a saint, redeemed by the blood of Christ.

If there is any celebration in remembering the saints, in remembering those who have gone before us into the Church Triumphant.

It rests not in our recognition of their sainthood, but in the sainthood they received through their faith in the crucified and risen Christ.

Just think of those great, historical saints, whom the church has honored for centuries.

Think of the Apostles, Peter, James and John, who were arguably Jesus' closest disciples during his earthly ministry.

Peter would have prevented Jesus from accepting the cross for our redemption, yet when Jesus was arrested, he denied he even knew him, not once but three times.

James and John seemed to be more interested in obtaining political favor from Jesus.

Remember they wanted to sit at his right and left hand when they thought he would bring about an earthly kingdom.

They failed to realize the depth of our Lord's ministry, and the sacrifice he would make for their redemption.

Even Paul, who wrote close to half of the New Testament, and whose theology has shaped the Christian church to this day, once prided himself in persecuting those who believed in Christ.

And we could go on and on, throughout the pages of Scripture, and find that there was not one of those hallowed saints.

That did not fail to truly love and express their appreciation to God, at some point in their lives, for all that God had done for them.

Even the revered saints, not recorded in Scripture, such as Augustine, Mother Theresa, etc. have had their faults.

As we read and understand the lives of the saints, this is what gives each of us hope for the future.

Through the lives of the saints, we come to understand that God, through the power of his Holy Spirit, can overlook our sin.

And through the power of his Holy Spirit, enable us to witness the redeeming grace in Jesus the Christ.

And so, today we remember, not only those great hallowed saints of years past.

But also those who have contributed in a major way to the theological formation of Christ's church.

And every individual, who through their faith and baptism into Christ's death and resurrection, have contributed to our own life of faith.

For as John says in our text for today: ***See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.***

So, let us give thanks this day for the lives of all of God's saints from years past, who have helped us grow in faith.

Let us rejoice that they have reached the destination of their journey of faith, and now rejoice in the presence of our crucified and risen Lord.

But let us also strive to continue in the faith of our baptism, to witness to the faith that we ourselves have received, for we are now, children of God.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.