

Sermon for the Feast of All Saints

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1)

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

“Beloved, you are God’s children now” (1 John 3:2).

God has declared this by His Word, which means this is most certainly true.

For
even while we were still sinners;

even though we had
turned (and continue to turn) from our God and Father and from His house and
His perfectly ordered life for peace in communion with Him and with one
another,

He
has never quit loving us.

He has
never turned aside from His promise to gather us back into His household.

He has never turned
back from His promise to set us apart from sin and death, that we might have
life everlasting in Him.

In
fact, just the opposite!

For
even while we were still sinners, God sent His Son for us (Rom 5:8).

Christ our Lord died

for us to rescue us, to redeem us, and to restore us to God's presence in God's household in everlasting communion with Him and one another for everlasting peace.

And

it is this finished business, this completed salvation,

this new and

everlasting reality that St. John literally sees with his own eyes in his vision at Patmos.

According

to the revelation given to Him AND to you by our Lord this day,

John sees a multitude of the poor in spirit now made rich by the grace of God.

He

sees the persecuted prophets who have come to their reward.

He sees those who

have left behind all mourning, meekness, hunger, and thirst, for he sees the saints of God - the blessed - the "set-apart -

the holy ones

gathered about the Lamb who has raised them up from sin and death.

He has

made their robes white by the cleansing of His own blood.

He has cleansed their hearts and consciences in the waters of Holy Baptism.

He has distilled

them to their finest essence, to their truest selves by removing their guilt and regret, their shame and fear.

In other words, He

has made them fully human as He is fully human (Tx David Petersen)

Today,

we see them with the palms of victory in their hands, for they have overcome the evil one by the Blood of the Lamb.

Today, they reap the benefits - the plunder and the glory of HIS sacrifice:

They
reap where they did not sow.

They
buy and eat without money or cost.

Jesus relieves them
of all burdens and bestows His own inheritance and perfect love upon them.

And of
all their joys, here is the greatest:

that Christ Himself,
the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, abides in their midst.

He
is with them, and they are with Him.

That is, after all,
what it means to be *blessed*.

To be
"blessed" means to be *set apart* for life in Christ.

To be *set apart*
means to be *holy*. To be *holy* means to be a *saint*,
righteous in God's sight,

redeemed by grace
and declared not guilty before God so that you may remain in His presence in
communion with Him for life everlasting in His kingdom.

Blessed
- set apart - sainted - holy...

These words all mean the same thing!

And
they all refer to what St. John sees in his vision.

For
John sees the blessed ones -

He sees the set-apart - the saints - the holy ones.

He sees the people
from every tribe and nation and language who have been called out of the
darkness and gathered into the Lord's presence - which means,

he sees you! For you, too, are participants in that very multitude!

Christ
has redeemed you.

Jesus has Baptized
you, cleansing you that you may enter into God's presence.

Jesus
has absolved you, which means your sins are forgiven.

Your robes shine
with the brilliant white of His righteousness, for you have washed them in the
blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14).

And so,
you ARE saints.

You ARE holy. And so am I!

Do you
see my halo?

Do you see the
shining crown gleaming over my head as a revelation of my holiness and
saintliness?

If
you don't, it's only because you are looking in the wrong place...

Because
it's right there [point to Jesus' silhouette]!

You
see, I have no halo of my own... I have NO HOLINESS of my own...
and neither do you.

For we will never be
holy by way of our own moral efforts or good behavior.

Rather,
the holiness we have -

the holiness we *receive*,
is Christ's holiness which He shares with us when we abide in Him.

It is HIS halo that covers us - HIS righteousness that clothes us.

The
scriptures make this clear.

I'll refer you back
to the "welcome statement" in your Service Folders this morning for all the
Scripture references,

but in 1 Cor where
St. Paul tells us that Christ is our holiness (1Cor 1:30), he means that "we
are holy in Him (Phi 1:1; 4:21);

we
are sanctified by faith in Him (Acts 26:18).

His
Word makes and keeps us holy (John 17:17, Eph 5:26, 1Tim 4:5).

God the Father

sanctifies us by uniting us with His Son and by giving us His Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:11, 2Thes 2:13, 1Pet 1:2).

We
are not expected to generate our own holiness.

Rather,
we participate in God's holiness which we receive from Christ as we travel with Him through life along the holy way" (*John W. Kleinig, "Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today," CPH, 2008*).

Therefore,
to be a saint means nothing other than to take your place under the shelter of Christ's holiness -

quite literally, to
take your place in worship before the throne where you add your voices to those of every nation and tribe and people and language in the unending song of praise,

"Salvation
belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Blessing and glory
and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God
forever
and ever! Amen."

We sing
this song even now in this fallen world;

we sing it as we are reviled and persecuted for Christ's
sake,

and we will sing it
forever in all the fullness of glory to be revealed.

Who ARE
these clothed in white robes that St. John sees with his own eyes?

They are Brenda, Bill Cookston's beloved wife;

Victor, Susan's father,

James, my own father,

Adolph, Mike Lorence's father,

Lazarus, John and Jo

Rudsenske's grandson who died on the eighth day of his short, blessed life.

Who are

these in white robes standing in the presence of God?

They are you and me - the Baptized -

all who have been

raised up in Christ as a new creation to share in His holiness -

all who hunger and

thirst for His righteousness, and who now come into His presence to receive His gifts for life everlasting.

Blessed

are you.

Holy are you.

Set apart are

you for a life of unending peace and joy in the presence of God and of the Lamb.

He will

shelter you with His presence.

You shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore.

The

sun shall not strike you, nor any scorching heat.

For the

Lamb in the midst of the throne is YOUR Shepherd,

and He will guide you to springs of living water,

and God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Preached by Pastor Holowach

Sermon Texts: Matthew 5:1-12, Rev 7:9-17, 1 John 3:1-3.