

SERMON- All Saints' Day (transferred)
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Daniel 7:1-3,15-18

Psalms 149

Ephesians 1:11-23

St. Timothy's (Herndon)
November 6, 2022

Luke 6:20-31

OPENING:

Greetings St. Timothy's and HAPPY ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY!

I am so sorry to miss this occasion with you all

because it is this Feast Day

and it's also because it's St. Timothy's Birthday, we are 154 years young.

You know that's a subject near and dear to my heart and, by my estimation, you've never looked better

But, out of an abundance of caution, here I am, prerecorded from my home in Fox Mills. I am thankful to be able to give this by the wonders of technology and thankful for the Very Reverend Fran Gardner Smith and for the Reverend Jackie Thomson for "covering" for me. I owe you both one!

One more word of warning: this sermon started as a children's sermon, where I would invite all the children up and ask questions. Obviously I can not do that now. Then I thought I would be giving it to someone else to preach it, now it's in this version, so bear with me.

SONG

I SING A SONG of the SAINTS of GOD

patient and brave and true

who toiled and fought and lived and died

for the Lord they loved and knew.

so goes the well-known hymn.

The second verse, includes a list of modern-day saints:

And one was a soldier, and one was a priest,

and one was slain by a fierce wild beast:

In my family, we had one soldier and we have one priest, so my siblings must really be worried about what their sainthood will entail.

This hymn was first in the *Hymnal 1940* but was only retained *barely* in our current version, because thought its so-called "lack of theological profundity." There was a letter-writing campaign to keep it and it stuck.

That's good and I love this hymn.

It was written by a woman in Britain but is apparently not well-known there. That's ironic because it's so British: queen, the shepherdess on the green, and the meeting at shops and tea. (There is a dreadful version out there, by the way, where the lyrics have been Americanized.)¹

Unfortunately, it's also one of only a few hymns written by a woman in our hymnal

Those elements should all be considered together as we celebrate: ALL SAINTS regardless of time or geography, gender or education SUNDAY.

HALLOWEEN

That song got me thinking about saints and who we become in our lives, the professions we choose and the costumes we wear.

I wanted to ask the children what they had dressed up as for Halloween because it's great fun and to try draw the connection between Halloween and All Saints'.

The connection is worth drawing for adults too.

“Hallow” is another word for “Saint” and so All Hallow's Eve, Halloween, is All Saints' Eve.

Bishop Johnston always stressed this the fact that Halloween is not a pagan holiday but rather is a deeply Christian one. Or it can be, if we choose to think about it in that way

→ So, why do we dress up wearing such costumes on Halloween, the night before All Saints'?

To show that we are not scared of witches and demons and devils and things like that. To say that those things aren't real, and although there is bad stuff in the world, that God is bigger than those things. We make fun of ghouls and bats and vampires because those things have no power over us. We know that the next day, we will come here and celebrate All Saints and God's victory over death.

→ That having been said, my next question was to be: what did you dress up for today? But, of course, no one dresses up for All Saints usually!

Just in church clothes, which is hard enough for your parents.

The important thing is that God looks down, does not see goblins and ghouls, but see us as Children of God, as Saints.

¹ | Sing a Song of the Saints of God - HymnSite.com - United Methodist Hymnal #712

Think of it this way:

For All Saints Day:

God walks into a toy store and he has action figures of us.

God makes us holy and sets us apart for good and holy things.

God thinks so highly of us, that he would think of us as Action figures.

We are MARVEL and DC comic book heroes. Each uniquely made and powerful.

We are saints, all of us.

God calls us to be God's children, saints.

We don't know what we will grow into or become. We know we are God's saints now.

ALL SAINTS

We actually are celebrating Saints in 3 ways today:

- 1) Indeed, we celebrate All the saints alive, all the saints in this room, on this livestream
- 2) We also celebrate All the saints who have died, who have gone before us, we will get to them in a second
- 3) And then we celebrate All the saints from the Bible and from history.

→ (So my question for the young people.)

Who knows any saints in the Bible?

I was going to give them some help by saying

All these sails, they are all Jesus' disciples, and they are each a saint.

and then on these Kneelers: St. John, St. Peter, St. Paul, that you are sitting on, our saints.

You are inside of a church dedicated to a pretty good one, St. Timothy.

So think about it, you are surrounded by saints. You ARE a saint, and when you come forward for communion, you kneel on a saints' cushion, and if you ever don't know how to get there, you just follow that sail that also represents a saint.

HOMEWORK

It's sometimes harder to think about the saints among us, that's why I think a lot of people did not like the song from the start. It seems a little hokey.

I also know that's true because in the very first sermon that I gave, 7 months ago, I asked folks to talk about the saints that have meant a lot to them in their life, who have been the saints who have guided them, directed them like the sails towards God.

I wish that I could say that I was overwhelmed by responses but I will bring it up again today and ask again for folks to think about the sails in our sanctuary in that way.

One parishioner, a Saint who shall remain nameless, did respond and talk about all the saints in her life, the examples she gave were a series of women who she encountered and interacted with. They were not heroic in the superhero sense, but they steered her to the Episcopal faith and to this church. We celebrate those women—and let's put an emphasis on them being women—and them being Saints to be commemorated today.

I am still interested in hearing about the Saints in your lives, those who are living, those who are dead, those who meet the traditional definition, and those who you have found:

*in school, or in lanes, or at sea,
in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea;*

I have met so many saints here at St. Timothy's.
(and this was going to be the moment where I named folks in the congregation that were sitting there in front of me.)
I can't do that unfortunately, but you can look around and see them.

We should knit kneelers for them, we should have sails for them.
They are my... our action figure heroes who do battle for this church.

CONCLUSION

FINALLY today we celebrate the SAINTS WHO HAVE DIED, who have gone on but are still knit to us in this thing called the Communion of Saints.
Some of them are interred right here in the Sanctuary in our Columbarium. I forget to mention them as another way that we are surrounded by saints.

We pray for them today, and in some way we are joined to them, just as we are joined together in this community, and joined to all those faceless saints across the ages.

I like that our Columbarium, the color is white, the color of Baptism, the color of All Saints, the color of Easter, and the color of our funeral services

That's the costume that we strive to wear all the time, to remember our identity in

Christ and our membership in Christ's Body, as we now make our Baptismal Promises to God and to one another. **AMEN**