

SERMON- All Saints (B)

Charles R. Cowherd

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

Psalms 24

Revelation 21:1-6a

St. Timothy's (Herndon)

November 3, 2024

Mark 10:13-16¹

OPENING:

When I was planning the Baptism for this weekend,
I successfully sold the family on All Saints Day,
one of the major feast days of our calendar,
and one of the four Sundays intended by the church for baptism.
I had to tell Liz and Damian however,
just so you know, All Saints this year is November 3rd, 2024
the Sunday that is two days before the Presidential Election.
And that my guess that there might be a tremendous amount of anxiety in the room
that morning and,
for better for worse,
the congregation and myself might look to channel that anxiety,
like a lot of family systems do,
directly into their young people.

So there is a lot on young Charlotte this morning, but no more, I might argue, than
on a normal Sunday morning. There is often a shift that happens about 3 minutes
into my sermon, when attention starts to drift, it's about the moment when I start
exegeting the meaning of the Greek phrase, people start to crane their necks to
maybe see what Charlotte or Mary Emmanuelle are doing.

BAPTISMAL CANDIDATE

Charlotte indeed had delighted us with her smile and her voice ever since Easter
Sunday when she and her parents decided to give us a try.
People took notice. At a Vestry meeting sometime later in the Spring I was doing a
report on our Newcomers, showing pictures and introducing who had been visiting
our church. After I got to the Budnicks, Carolyn Hamm interjected:
“CHARLES, WHEN ARE YOU EVER GOING TO GET AROUND TO
BAPTIZING THAT BEAUTIFUL BABY?”

¹ Baptismal Lection used to replace All Saint (Year B) lection from John

It was phrased as a question, but it was more of a command.

I said: “As soon as they will allow it.”

So know that God has made the first claim on Charlotte, that she is a child of God, beautifully and wonderfully made in God’s image.

We will admit that a second claim has been made by a family that loves her and tries to model God’s love for her, unconditionally, more than she could ask or imagine.

But know also that St. Timothy’s has put a third claim on her, that this community here is also about to make some promises alongside of you to walk with her and her parents in her faith journey.

FAITH JOURNEY

At St. Tim’s, that journey of discipleship is modeled for us in this space, this space tells a story, provide a roadmap of how we go on our earthly pilgrimage, what happens in our spiritual lives as we seek to follow God and God’s Way.

Of course, I am referring to the 12 Sails which symbolize the 12 Disciples/ the 12 tribes of Israel.

They represent ALL the Saints that have journeyed up to the Altar here, ready to surround one another and God in praise and pain, in thanksgiving and in heartbreak.

We come forward in our path of discipleship, following those sails, trusting in God, modeling the Way for those we baptize and bring up in the faith.

We do so like the fishermen and the sordid band who followed Jesus, and then we ALIGHT on these 12, there is that number again, these 12 Kneelers around the Communion Rail.

My sermon today is going to be about those Kneelers, which help tell that story of discipleship, of what happens AFTER we are baptized.

HEAVENLY HANDS

To do so, I am using a Document that is printed in your bulletin that was shared by Sally Cowan with me recently: of some of our Saints of Yore, who lovingly stitched these Kneelers.

The group was called the “Heavenly Hands,” and I could not believe, although I have seen pictures, that we used to kneel down on the hard, barely carpeted surface, until 30 some years ago when Sally and Jackie Clattenberg and others came up with this idea and made a proposal to Father Brad and.

Their first theme for the Kneelers was a good one, and it was to do the 12 Apostles (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, Matthew, Phillip, Bartholomew, James the Less, Thaddeus, Judas, Simon the Zealot) that would have linked to the 12 sails, etc.

They had another idea, even better, which was to have the 12 kneelers depict 12 events in St. Timothy’s History. what 12 images could have gone on them to depict our 156-year presence here in Herndon? I am Salivating over the prospect and even though All Saints Day is also our Birthday that is a great sermon for another day!

But the third theme they decided on was the right choice, I think, and they decided on doing the following

In the thirty years since, the Kneelers have gotten kind of mixed up and jumbled, Our job is today to learn a little bit about them and put them in the correct order, as printed in your bulletin.

the **4** Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)

Peter and Paul (the **two** most important apostles)

Two concepts- Trinity (more on that later) and All Saints (today)

Timothy, our patron and John the Baptist

2 unspecified (which turned into the Holy Family: Mary and Joseph)

KNEELERS

St. PETER: Nets, Keys, Crucified Upside Down, first Bishop of Rome, the disciple who made the 1st Confession.

ST. JOSEPH: Carpenter tools (saw, hammer, lathe). *Teknon*: (this is where people start to drift) worked with wood, and other materials, more of an artisan.

ALL SAINTS: Hand of God reaches out to bless the 3-pointed diadem, I think about the Heavenly Hands who made these also, to symbolize the reward for the

faithful and the life after death. Halloween, Spooky, Prayers for the Dead.
Necrology/ Baptism. White at Funerals. Halloween: "I ain't scared of no ghost."

ST MATTHEW: All the Evangelists, writers of the Gospel, Winged Angel. Merging of Human and Divine. Incarnation. 4 faced creature of Ezekiel (1.10). 4 animals: human, lion, ox, and eagle. 4 sides of the Gospel, 4 Beatles, 4 different singers

ST. MARK'S: winged lion, John the Baptist roaring out of the wilderness, Mark Prescott moving it. Ferocity of the language, it hits you hard

ST. LUKE'S: Winged Ox symbolizes sacrifice, a key them in Luke's Gospel. Begins and ends in the temple.

ST. JOHN the EVANGELIST: Winged Eagle, soaring prose, lofty Christology of John's theology. Heavenly opening, visions from Revelation

ST. JOHN the BAPTIST: Holding the lamb of God, reeds from the River Jordan, connection to the symbols of Israel from Moses. Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord

ST. TIMOTHY'S. No clubs or stones, because it was too bloody, image from other publications. Bishop's mitre and crook, first bishop of Ephesus. Young, made mistakes, he went across cultures.

ST. FRANCIS: Was supposed to be Trinity but switched out. Key theological theme? Francis reaches out to Bluebird on olive branch. Peace and nature

ST. MARY: Fleur de Lis as traditional symbol of Mary. 3 points for the Trinity.

ST. PAUL: Sword of the Spirit is in Latin, Scripture, sharper than a double-edged sword. Decapitated as death.

CONCLUSION

There is so much to be said about the Kneelers. Flowers: a whole another sermon, beautiful connections and symbolism. But we have a baby to be baptized.

Did most of the work separately, our faith journeys can seem like they are taken alone. The sails begin in distinct spots. God calls us as individuals but then we join

a community of faith to help us along the way.

Kneelers also took time: 4800 hours of crafting and \$11,400. Dry rot

Always a work in progress, always learning (remember Ellie's sermon), we are here to learn, to be formed, to walk in this journey, to make mistakes, to fall down and then to get back up again.

Average kneeler lasts 85 years, of course would last longer if children did not walk on them with their shoes.

I will leave you with this, think about as you approach the altar and alight on a particular kneeler.

Who I am called to be like today? When you kneel upon the 1/12? Am I called to be Stubborn like Peter, resourceful like Timothy, caring like Joseph,

OR are you called to be like yourself? Enchanting and bright and vivacious like Charlotte.

Let's commit and recommit ourselves to our own Baptism, our own Journey, knowing that it might take 4800 hours, it might take 85 years, but we are always walking forward in faith together.