

All Saints
Revelation 21:1-6a

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

So, how was everyone's Halloween? In Penn Township it was trick or treat night On Tuesday, and we had a bunch of kids come by. We had the pirates, ninjas, princesses, skeletons, children of all kinds and styles came by our house on Tuesday. How many remember those days when you were their age and you went out trick or treating? What was your favorite costume? Did you enjoy Halloween as a kid? Yep, it ranked up there with Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. All great days to be a child. Halloween to me was always the start of it all. You know what I mean. It was the beginning of the Holiday season, summer was over now on to the Holidays of the Winter.

As soon as Halloween was over the decorations would instantly change to Thanksgiving because it was next. Believe it or not it is just three and a half weeks away. Thanksgiving was another great holiday. Not so much for candy or gifts but for family get togethers and feasting. For many people thanksgiving brings back wonderful memories of home, childhood memories of uncle ed or aunt Minnie, grandpop and grandmom, Do you remember sitting at the kids table or when you got moved up to the adult table. Can you remember the smells of those days of the family getting together for the Turkey, of stuffing and sweet potatoes filling the air with the odor of pumpkin pie topping everything off. It evokes a sense of home: security, fun, innocence, and joy with no worries or concerns. And then we get to Christmas and New Years and for a child they are even more special and magical.

But the Holidays are hard for many people because these same memories that we cherish and hold dear also remind us of friends and relatives who have died and entered into God's kingdom. Most of you here have experienced these loses, you have gone through the loss of a loved one in your life time, a mother or father, a spouse, or maybe even a child. As we enter this holiday season, our thoughts may return to our departed loved ones and we are once again reminded of the sadness and the hole that is left when someone we care about dies. That is why it is important to remember one more holiday, one more HOLY day that comes right before all those other commercialized ones, that the department stores, grocery stores, and hallmarks stores live for. It is the day Halloween was named after, Halloween always falls on October 31st because it is remembering All Hallows Eve the night before the festival of All Saints, held every year on November 1st. Halloween has become its own more recognized holiday, especially for young children who love all that candy, but it was and should still really

be the night of holiness before the remembrance of all those who have died and entered God's eternal peace – the Day of All Saints.

This Sunday we celebrate - All Saints Day, a Holy Day that has been celebrated as a yearly observance for over seventeen centuries dating back to the 4th century in 397 A.D. This is the day set apart in the church year to remember those people in our lives who died in the Christian faith and who now are with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we hear one of the traditional All Saints day readings from book of Revelation of Jesus Christ to John, we can even picture our own loved ones there in that city that he sees being lowered out of heaven for him to observe. We can try to picture the faithful who are now a part of God's eternal paradise.

However even as you picture your loved ones there, let me remind you that this passage from Revelation is not meant for those who have already died. This is for people who are still alive on this earth, on this side of heaven. John was writing this vision to a people under persecution that were facing imminent imprisonment, torture, suffering and pain or even death. This beautiful vision of heaven was meant for them, to booster their courage, to assure them God's in charge, that the victory is assured. That yes death might come but when you die, die in the Lord, into his promised kingdom. This beautiful revelation of heaven is also meant for you and me and for all Christians around the world even in this day, perhaps we don't face the same tribulations that the first century Christians had to face, but the words of John's vision can still booster our courage, assure us that God's in charge, and that when we die we die in the Lord. In this vision, John is trying to put into words a description of heaven. Right there at the beginning of Revelation 21 John receives the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, The Lord will swallow up death forever, the Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces. John heard the voice of the Lord say: "See the home of God is among mortals, he will dwell with the, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more."

John goes further in chapter 21 to give us a further glimpse of what this paradise will be like, the restored Garden of Eden. This is what is called the New Jerusalem, the City of God, and this is the place where the gate will never shut and where God's glory and holiness dwells forever as He sits upon His throne. This is heaven.

And on top of that, John is given more than just a glimpse of the beauty of the city, but also a promise and an assurance from God. John hears God say that he "is making all things new." The old has passed away and everything will be made new.

This is written for you and for me for a reason. We might not think of as perfect, but we are indeed in need of being made new. Just in the next few verses not in the reading we read

from, John hears that only those who have conquered will enter into this holy city. But those who are corrupted in sin, and fallen away will be cast out. I for one am glad that John hears that all will be made new, for each of us sin. The truth is none of us measure up to the standards of perfection that God demands. None of us are pure. None of us would be able to enter that city gates. We inherit the sin of our first parents, and they from their parents and so on and so on all the way back to Adam and Eve, who, in the first Garden of Eden, disobeyed God. We confess that we are by nature sinners and that we in no way deserve or can demand God's love, let alone a place in the city of God.

And yet the Lord is a loving and gracious God. If He were not, He would not have even revealed any of this to John in this Revelation of Heaven. He would not have commanded John to write all this down. But He did. And the good and gracious Lord almighty even provided the way for sinners to have access to the kingdom, namely, through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. For those who believe and have faith, for those who trust in Jesus and the grace of God, will inherit eternal life.

This is why Jesus came into this world to live the perfect life for us, to be unblemished, to be pure through and through and to step in to our punishment for our sakes. When we deserve the punishment Jesus says, "No Lord, cast your punishment on me and free them of their sins." That is also why Jesus had to die for us as well.

Jesus did not enjoy being crucified. He did not relish the thought of suffering and dying in our place. But He knew that that is what He needed to do because of the joy that would follow the joy of knowing that His work on the cross would begin the promise to make all things NEW. Now he lives never more to die, He makes that same promise to all who hear and believe His Word; the joy of knowing each one of you personally as He died for you and rose again, that he died so that you might become the righteous nation, the righteous people the saints worthy of heaven.

Heaven is truly our home. This text gives us comfort today, because we know that in that new city, it will be the Holidays, the Holy Days forever. We will be reunited with all those who have gone before in Christ, and join with them before the throne of God. God assures us of this. He sent Jesus to make us new, to make us his saints, his children forever, one family, one people, righteous, redeemed and filled with Joy before his everlasting throne. Let us give thanks for that vision that grants us hope and peace this day. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

MAY THE PEACE AND GRACE OF GOD BE WITH YOU THIS DAY AND THROUGHOUT THE WEEK TO COME.

Let us pray for all the saints of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Gracious Heavenly Father, as we worship remembering the festival of your saints, we give you thanks for sending all of them to us to know and to love. Through them with your Spirit your word has been lifted up and your church has moved around the world. Saints of all times and places have shared your glory and witnessed to us your power and mercy. We give you thanks again for giving them to us to know and to love in this life
Lord in your Mercy, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, we come before you filled with the Holy Spirit, but in need of renewal. Impart new vigor into our lives, lift us up in strength to be your chosen holy ones, your followers, your saints. Give us the strength to do what you would have us do. Show us the plans of how to do your work in this place. Give us the spiritual strength to be willing to lift up your praise to all those we meet in the way we live and in the way we speak. Guide us as your church on earth to do your work in our community and beyond.

Lord in your Mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, grant healing to all those who this day come to you in need. Many face sickness and diseases, persecution and violence. There are many around the world that are in need of hope and gifts of life of medicine and shelter, food and health. Grant this gift to all your creation Lord, Take away the pains of mourning and sadness, the pains of sickness and illness, the pains of physical or mental anguish. Grant your Spirit to come upon all your people that are in need this day, especially we pray for our shut-ins and our Homebound, our hospitalized and for Howell Crawford, Gladys Garrett, Joe Krouse, Jackie Bolin and all those we name know in our prayers to you.....

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer

God, in his death and resurrection, Christ our Lord revealed your merciful heart. Strengthen those who look to you in the midst of pain and suffering. In your compassion, bring the power of the resurrection to all those saints that have passed on into your heavenly kingdom. Comfort those who stand at the grave and mourn the death of loved ones. Especially this day we remember all those who have gone into your heavenly city this past year, we pray in remembrance ofRae Koontz.....And for all other beloved ones that have died this year and throughout our lives that we miss and mourn and offer up to you in our prayers....

Lord in your Mercy... hear our prayer

Almighty God, empower your people today, as you empowered those first disciples. Breathe the power of the Holy Spirit into our lives so that we can be filled with courage, boldness, and Vigor for the life of your Word. Inspire all bishops, pastors and laity to be your saints, together working as one family blessed by you and lifted up by you in all that we do. Grant all those who are a part of the priesthood of all believers in the ways of wisdom, love, and integrity. Be with the people gathered at this Church and send us out renewed filled with hope in your everlasting love. Lord in your Mercy..... hear our prayer.

Into your hand O lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.