

All Saints Sunday  
Luke 6:20-31

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.

For well over a thousand years, All Saints has been marked on the calendar as November 1<sup>st</sup> and All Saints Sunday is the Sunday closest following that Date. So today we celebrate All Saints, a day set aside during the year to honor all the saints of the Lord.

Of course in this day and age – the word saint has almost passed out of existence. Now a days saints aren't admired, held up as a model for youth and others to imitate as a pattern of life. When was the last time you heard the news report on the latest Saint craze!

In today's world the crazes all center around whatever is the hottest and latest Celebrity news. Celebrities get put up on a pedestal and are worshipped as some one that walks above the ground. Fans go crazy just to be near them and to even touch them. Think of some of those types that people have done this too sports figures, movie stars, musicians like the Beatles, Elvis, Britney Spears. Miley Cyrus all musicians of different times and places, but are considered idols by thousands of screaming fans. These Celebrities are kept away just out of reach behind their limos, their estates, their body guards. The news media hound these people looking for the latest news, gossip or tall tale not even caring if it is true, just hoping to get the latest media attention. Musicians, movie stars, sports figures even politicians are all trying to get their name known, good or bad. They just want to be famous because with fame comes riches, with riches comes power, with power comes more fame. And so they work the media and the media works them to build up a celebrity star of the week for the Entertainment news, or MTV or even 60 minutes. Those celebrities are out there just out of reach but seen enough so that the common person gets that feeling that they can be like them or near them.

Now on the other hand a saint is a part of our world, walks the same streets we walk, lives in the same towns we live. Saints live among us. A saint is familiar, and is taken for granted, and is most times not even seen. They are all around us and even here this day.

This is the standard New Testament designation for saints: the forgiven who know it, act upon it and live by grace without angling for stained glass window status. The late William Stringfellow, a Christian Activist for the poor, described saints "as those men and women who relish the events of life as a gift and who realize that the only way to honor such a gift is to

give it away." That is a great definition. A saint is someone who realizes that life is a gift and they live that gift sharing it in any way they can with others.

The Gospel from Luke 6 offers Jesus' pattern of what that difference looks like between the celebrities, the superstars and the famous of this world and the saints of the Kingdom of God. Called the sermon on the Plain, it is a third shorter than the better known Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel. It contains the Woes as well as the Blessings of the beatitudes. Here Jesus addresses his followers who-would-be-saints with a life pattern of living. But keep in mind this is not worldly view of what is successful, what is to be admired, what is desired more than anything. It is not a pattern of how our society works, but rather a pattern of what it means to be a saint of the Lord, to be God's disciples and servants.

The details of Luke's setting are very important. The text right before our Gospel reading for today says Jesus had come down from the hills where he was praying. Arriving on the plain a great crowd from all Judea, Jerusalem and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon come to him. This crowd of disciples and mob of the sick and troubled people quickly surround him. Picture desperate people jostling, pushing, begging, clamoring, demanding, all reaching for his touch of healing, all looking for help just to pass by them and show compassion on them.

It is a sight more alarming than inspiring. There is nothing safe and tidy about people grasping for their only hope to be rid of the pain, the paralysis or the weakness once and for all. We would rather not see pain or suffering, we would rather go on about our business rather than see a homeless person sitting on a street corner in need. We tend to try to tune those images out, ignore them, push them away. But Jesus doesn't he walks right into the midst of those in need, touching them, caring for them, healing them, loving them.

And in this midst of this scene, Jesus looks up at his disciples and tells them what it means to be a saint. He looks up apparently they were bystanders not part of that struggling onslaught to get near him. And he calls them down into the very untidiness of the crowds. Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who hunger, blessed are those who weep, blessed are those who are reviled and hated. He calls them down into the midst of the poor, the hungry, the grieving, the reviled and hated. To be a saint, Jesus says is to come down into that midst, to care, to love as he is loving.

In the Beatitudes Jesus flips over the reality. People want to be rich, happy, full, that is what drives Wall Street, Madison Avenue, the Banks, that is what drives the mall, the grocery's stores and restaurants, car dealership and drug stores, all of the market for that matter. Most people aim to be full of good food. To eat of the best, to have the best candy,

the best sandwich, the best burger, the best steak, the best lobster, the best of whatever. Most people live looking for happiness, for joy, only when living it up in life do they feel alive. People want to be respected and held up as honored, acclaimed, awarded individuals of society. This is all true, this is all we would expect as normal. But Jesus flips it all over. He tells us that the poor are blessed, God will give them everything. Blessed are the hungry, for God will fill them. Blessed are those who weep, for God will give them comfort. To be a child of God is to be connected to God in ways that we can not be if we center our lives on the worldly things, if we stand off ignore the pain, suffering, hurt that is around us.

Instead Jesus calls his followers to come down into the midst of the crowds, to be amongst the people and to know the hunger, the pain, the sorrow, and to seek the blessings of God that will come. Guided by Christ, St. Paul suffers for the Word, arrested, beaten, rejected, imprisoned and executed. St. Peter, uneducated, brash, blunt, uncouth, becomes leader of the church and is martyred for the faith. There are so many people of history that didn't seek the safe distance, to stand above the fray, they didn't look for fame or power. Ambrose, Anselm, Basil, Boniface, Augustine, Julian of Norwich, Clement of Alexandria, Teresa of Avila, Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, men and women who lived in the struggles of life, and served as saints of the Lord.

And yet there so millions more left unnamed throughout history that have done what God called them to do and are not famous. The Sunday school teacher that you had in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade who taught you God is Love. The caring friend that years ago showed you some care when you needed it. The stranger who walked up to you one day and offered you a hand when you felt all alone. Your grandmother, grandfather, mother or father wife or husband who loved you and cared for you even when no one else could possibly understand your pain. Think of all those people that have played an important part in making you who you are this day. Many of them have entered into the Kingdom of God ahead of us. But they were, they are all saints.

Right here today there are saints that we hold dear in our hearts that we sometimes over look. They are the saints of the rank and file of daily life. You see these saints making dinner for those who are hungry. You see them teaching little children in schools around the country. You see them in ER rooms and hallways of the hospitals. You see them in loved ones who simply love you for who you are. You see them in mothers and fathers who care for children even when it seems so difficult. You see saints in friends who stop by with a word of

hope or with a invitation to a meal. You see a saint when you just need an extra hand. They are all saints.

Today on All saints Sunday we hear that message once again. The message that God has chosen us to be his holy ones, he is looking up at us and calling us into the midst of the world. Today feel the call of God in your life as he calls you in your baptism to be his follower, his chosen one to live in a life of reality as a blessed one of God. May you be connected with God in all ways. May you feel his presence in all your needs, and with all your hopes. May God assure you of your place in his heavenly kingdom. May you find your place in this world as a true child of God, as a saint in his eternal kingdom.

Amen.

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