

Sermon: For All The Saints
Scripture: Romans 12:4-13
Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans
Date: October 31, 2021

Here we are at what some have called the Autumn Triduum or All Hallow Tide. Our Spring Triduum is Eastertide and is Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday leading up to Easter. But this Autumn Triduum is All Hallow's Eve followed by All Saints Day followed by All Souls Day. As the leaves are falling from the trees and the natural world tucks in, in preparation for the coming winter, there comes this time when we ourselves consider and acknowledge the dead and what they mean and what death means for the living of our lives. You might say if we do it right that we face squarely and humbly and gratefully that presence of death which for the rest of the year we can often be in denial of.

The first celebration of this triduum is what we now call Halloween which we'll celebrate tonight not far from its original form actually, which was a carnival time where people would dress up and use humor and ridicule to confront the powers of evil and death. It's always been a time of merriment when children would go from door to door singing and receiving goodies. Then such merriment would give way to deeper and more serious acknowledgement of how greater than death were those whose lives were particularly marked by goodness and love and the spirit of Jesus Christ, those set apart and sanctified by his Spirit within them, otherwise known as the saints. And so All Saints Day lifted up the remarkable people and the remarkable deeds that triumphed over death and darkness. And finally, All Souls Day, was when all the faithful departed were

remembered and acknowledged along with the promise of eternal life for all those sanctified by God, not just the great saints but everyone saved by Christ.

That's the Autumn Triduum which placed death front and center in our lives, no longer denied or avoided or skirted around but our mortality on full display to be grappled with, laughed at, mocked, grieved over and ultimately proclaimed as NOT having the final word. It's a foreshadowing or reflection of what we'll celebrate at Eastertide and Easter as well when we place front and center Jesus' death on Good Friday and his conquering of death at Easter through the resurrection. It is the Spring of Easter and the presence of the resurrected Christ and his pervasive Spirit that makes possible the Autumn Triduum, the laughing at *death* of Halloween, the celebrating of the *goodness* of saints on All Saints Day, and the promise of *eternal life* for dearly departed on All Souls Day.

We all of us have somehow been gifted with this remarkable blessing that is life. And we all of us, none of us excluded, will experience the *end* of this life that we know with our eventual deaths. Whether we live for only a few years, a few decades or into our 80's or 90's, it is all but a breath, as the Psalmist puts it, a passing shadow, here and gone in the blink of an eye. The primary question for us is what do we do with the time in-between, with the time that is given us. I love that scene in the Lord of the Rings when Frodo says to the wizard Gandalf after the initial harrowing journey that brought them to the caves of Moriah but with still so far to go to get to Mordor where they could finally destroy the ring of power and they are already tired and scared and Frodo says – "I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had ever happened." And Gandalf says back to him "so do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us."

And the saints of the world, the saints in our lives are not those who have been particularly perfect in how they've lived cause all of us humans however great or small sin and fall short of the glory of God, but the saints among us are those who have in whatever way allowed the light of Christ, the love of God, the goodness of the Divine to shine through their lives despite their failings and struggles – sometimes through their failings and struggles - they are those who have in whatever way been used as vehicles not for their own glorification but for the glorification of God and in service to others. You know a saint when you meet one if that person calls out the best in you, doesn't make you feel small or lesser than but rather somehow accesses the spark of the divine, the image of God within you, and calls it forth. Do you know anyone like that in your life? Did you know someone like that in your life that has passed on, not someone so much that was amazingly good and smart and gifted but someone who called out your goodness, your gifts, so that you could be more saintly in your own life, sanctified and conveying God's Spirit to others.

We are all of us created with the image of God at the heart of who we are and we are all of us sanctified by the sacrificial love of this God in Jesus Christ who gave himself for all the saints and we all of us can live lives of saintly goodness in moments of grace and givenness of ourselves to others. And it can start with taking a moment here in the autumn of the year and considering the dead, all those who have come before us and remembering or acknowledging how the saintly edges of their lives have blessed our own, despite all the other stuff maybe that was there too. Remembering that we are not alone. We don't have to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and be better, but rather we have their example and their real presence in the communion of saints, the collective of God's people

and they are there to cheer us on and we are here to continue their lives forward and together we live out ever more fully the sanctified lives that God calls us to towards the coming of heaven on earth.

And so on this All Hallow's Eve, here's to all those we love who have died but who live in our hearts and through our lives yet and who we will one day again know in communion with all God's people who will gather one day in peace, amen!

Announcements and Benediction

As Andy said, we are in the middle of our pledge drive and we hope you'll consider pledging for the upcoming year. There are envelopes on the back table that we encourage you to take and fill out or you can do the on-line form that came in your email. Let us know if you are not on our email distribution list and we'll get you on there cause there's a lot happening around our community, speaking of which next weekend is a big one.

On Saturday night we have the installation in Ripley Chapel of We Are All Homeless and a presentation by Willie Baronet. There are still a few seats available to be there in person and you can also see it on-line and then come in the chapel later in the week to get an in-person experience of it. Then on Sunday we'll have worship with communion at the beginning for the day and then Lisa Loughlin's ordination at 2pm in the afternoon which will be a beautiful and joyful service that I don't think you'll want to miss.

Join us outside on the Abbe Patio for a time of refreshment before you head home and hope you have a good Autumn Triduum!

You shall see for yourself, that all manner of thing shall be well, all manner of thing shall be well. Not just for a moment of earthly life, but for all eternity.