

The Faith of Others—All Saints Sunday

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[Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18](#)

[Psalm 149](#)

[Ephesians 1:11-23](#)

[Luke 6:20-31](#)

It seems to me, that usually when I get up here, and do my best to interpret the bible, teach a little bit maybe, and make all this more relatable to your lives—it seems to me, that I'm always addressing "you." Maybe that's obvious... that I'm always talking to "you." Your life, your situation, your faith, your church. But I never stopped to think about that until this week when I was reading over our lessons for this All Saints Sunday. The Feast of All Saints is a time when we focus on others' faith, instead of first our own.

There are two special days in the history of the Church, All Saints, when we celebrate extraordinary believers and followers of Christ. And All Souls, when we celebrate all the baptized who have died and entered into God's glory. Lately, here in the Lutheran church, we've kind of blended these two together: and I think that's great. Because in our Baptism we believe we are all made one in Christ, all equally beloved by God. from St. Paul to Martin Luther to Desmond Tutu to your own grandmother.

So today we focus on others. Others who have gone before. *Others* who helped show the way. These, in the words of the prophet Daniel, are: "the holy ones of the Most High... [who] shall receive the kingdom and [the ones who will] possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever." The Psalmist sings of them as the: "assembly of the faithful. St. Paul in his letter to the church in Ephesus says, "[they] were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit," and they those who had God's "spirit of wisdom and revelation" and who had the eyes of their hearts enlightened.

I think we all have someone, somehow, like this, whether that's someone in your family, a parent or relative who embodied their faith so richly, so well, or a church leader, a saint from the past or the present in our tradition, a reformer, an author—someone, that without whom, you would not have the faith you have. Today we give thanks to God for them.

Today we remember the Church (with a capital C), is a gathering of the saints. We remember that this group of the called-out-ones, is big and wide and spans and stretches past the borders of countries and divisions, it even passes unscathed over the threshold of death.

I hope you noticed also this morning that each of our readings have a very political, economic edge. Daniel's vision has to do with mighty and powerful world leaders. Kings, they are called, kings then were military overlords. They took by violence and persuasion. They took by sheer power. And yet, Daniel reminds us, violence and persuasion and power do not give access to God's kingdom. In the Psalm we hear that it is not the powerful and the rich who dole out justice. But, instead, "the Lord takes pleasure in the people/ and adorns the poor with victory."

Always remember that the Hebrew people and their two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, were small, tiny, little nothing kingdoms in a vast world of power and legions and chariots. But God through the Psalm we believe promises: All these powerless, poor ones: Will "bind [] kings in chains/ and their nobles with links of iron,/ to inflict on them the judgment decreed..." This theme continues on in St. Paul's letter, and of course in Jesus' famous words in Luke's Gospel. Paul says, in a glaring protest against Augustus Caesar, the Emperor of Rome, that it is *Christ* who is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And God has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Whoa. Suddenly, these saints that we celebrate and remember today, these others besides ourselves, take on serious importance. And Jesus affirms all this in his words in Luke's Gospel. In this famous "sermon" in Luke, Jesus is blessing the ones who appear unblessed. Those poor, hungry, mourning and reviled. Why is he blessing them?

Because they have a window into God's ultimate reality. They are not distracted by comfort or popularity or being big in their own eyes. They see truly. And instead of lumbering around with this silly phrase: "God's ultimate reality" We shorten it to the poetic: God's Kingdom. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

God is King, which is a sexist way of saying: God is it. There is a way of life, a way of being, where the poor matter, where violence and might and cruelty are powerless.

How do we know? It wouldn't appear to be true if you looked at the headlines. How *do* we know? Because of the special, warm, hopeful feeling you all perhaps got when you thought of the special saint in your life. It is by these others, call *them* saints or holy ones or whatever, it is by them that we see Christ's body, we encounter God's Spirit. These special ones are very rarely rich, rarely popular. Usually they are unknown, little people—but who are filled and fill others with very big feelings, things like hope, love and faith. Today we have a chance to think of them, to remember them, to give thanks to God for them.

But today also, we are reminded too by God's Holy Spirit—that we are not alone in this thing called church. Too often we feel, as people and as congregations, we have to do it alone.

Believe alone, pray alone, stand alone. But, in truth, we are the opposite of alone. God the Holy Spirit is definitely with us. But we are also joined by the witnesses, the influence, the legacy and even the presence as we gather around the mystical communion table of Christ—of all the Saints, all who died and risen with Christ in the waters of Baptism.

We are not stranded here 2022. The Church doesn't need help. If The Church, or our church, seems sad, or impoverished, or rejected today I would invite you to remember Jesus' words. We are blessed. As our creeds, our ancient statements of faith, say: We believe, we have trust, in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life... We trust in the one holy catholic and apostolic church. We trust in something called the Communion of the Saints too—that Kingdom, that Commonwealth, of God.

We trust that by the power of God we are all bound together, in Christ's body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Amen.