



## “For All the Saints”

All Saints Sunday  
5:30 pm Saturday, November 5, 2016  
8:15 and 11:00 am Sunday, November 6, 2016  
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

A pastor and a politician arrive at heaven's gate together one day, and Saint Peter after doing all of the normal intake and the forms that have to be done, takes them in the hand to show them where they are going to be living for eternity. First they go to a building that has a lot of small single rooms, and when they open the door they see a bed, a table, and a chair. Saint Peter says to the clergy man, this will be your place, the politician was a little worried about what may be in store for him. They go down a lane and they come upon a big gate and in opening the gate they go forward and there they see a very large mansion with a fountain in front of it. They open up the front door and there they are greeted by a whole slew of servants. Saint Peter says to the politician, “and this is where you will be staying.” The politician asks, “wait a second, I don't understand, there's something wrong with this picture. Why do I get this mansion and this good holy man only gets a single room?” And Saint Peter said, “You have to understand how things are up here. We've got thousands and thousands of pastors, but you're the first politician whoever made it.”

I have been thinking about heaven a lot recently. This has been a rather rough year for my family and extended family. We have lost my mother, my grandmother, and my brother-in-law, and today they are represented by three names on the beautiful altar cloth that we have.

For many parishioners over the years I have offered as a sign of comfort a German proverb that I learned when I was in a monastery on retreat. Stated simply it is; “Those who live in the Lord never see each other for the last time.” This year I have had to remind myself of that proverb.

I often have people come up to me and give me some basic instructions about what they would like to see in their own funeral. The comments are usually very similar. They go along the lines of; I want it to be a happy time. I want it to be a time of celebration. I want it to be a time of family and friends coming together to remember. I understand where that comes from. We want to remember those good times and celebrate one's life. But funerals when properly done are really of movement. A movement from sadness and loss to celebration and hope. I like to think of it this way, in the same way that we conclude Holy Week, a funeral should be a movement from Good Friday to

Easter Sunday. A time when we mourn the loss of a loved one and a friend, but then also join in celebration of God's amazing power to restore life and to give us hope. It is celebrating a life lived and a legacy promised.

That's what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Ephesians. We pass on a gift, an inheritance, which is nothing less than the transmission of a legacy. In the Old Testament that inheritance was what God has promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a land, a place, a land of Canaan where an enslaved people could hold on to a promise that a God had given them something tangible, a real great hope that kept them going through times of trial and enslavement. It was a land that they could call their own, a land flowing with milk and honey.

In the New Testament Saint Paul speaks of a new Israel and usually we think of that as the promise of heaven, or the promise of an afterlife. In other words, after we live our life when we die then at some point we will receive a future heaven. But if we look closely at what Paul is writing to the Ephesians, his inheritance that he speaks about is not so much about heavenly rewards as commonly thought, but instead about you and I living in the here and now through God's purpose and in praise of his glory.

N.T. Wright says it this way: "God intends to flood the whole cosmos, heaven and earth together, with his presence and grace, and when that happens the new world that results, in which Jesus himself will be the central figure, He is to be the inheritance for which all of God's people long." This inheritance for you and for me is right here and right now. That inheritance is to be the foundation for all of God's saints. The church of Jesus Christ is made up of saints and sinners, the living and the dead, a community of people who come together to hear God's word, to listen to how that word may impact our lives and then to follow our Lord Jesus. It is to be for us God's heavenly kingdom to permeate our very being right here and right now. What this would look like is God's heavenly kingdom living in our hearts and in our actions. Paul in verse 15 talks about how "I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all of the saints and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you, as I remember you in my prayers." You might notice that what Paul has done there is basically rephrased the great commandment to love God and to love people. To love God with all of your heart and might and soul, and to love your neighbor as yourself.

And the activity of the Holy Spirit of God will be the sign that all of these things will be accomplished. It is nothing less than God's powerful, personal presence of the living God fulfilling his purposes and his promises to his saints both living and triumph. And so you and I celebrate that communion of saints with each other today and every Lord's day that we gather and celebrate the holy communion. God is with us and all of his saints are with us now and forever as the body of Christ called to be a people unified in singular of purpose. We are called to unity rather than division, a unity that stands across time and space. A unity in which we celebrate and confess in the Nicene Creed where we talk about the communion of saints and what do these living saints do, what do these eternal saints do?

First we are to pray for one another. It is the highest form of servant hood offering prayer for one another. The point of the prayer is nothing less than God and his Son.

We will forever be confounded, we will forever be disillusioned and disappointed if we seek to somehow do it all by ourselves. In God and with God's presence and purpose our desires can be realized as we offer our complete trust and commitment to God. The saints of God understand this fundamental truth. Nothing can eclipse God's power and dominion. All that is right or all that is wrong with our world is nothing compared to the power and purposes of God in Christ Jesus. He is with us through good times and bad, through any struggle that we might have.

Secondly we are inspired by faith and called to build community because our faith is a living faith. It's about here and now, it's never too far from us. You and I are called to be in a relationship with God that transcends that time and space. And we are called into Christian community and fellowship of faith. And so, we always want to remember we better all get along now because we will be spending eternity with one another.

Finally, we are also, in everything that we say and do, to point to Jesus the head and the perfecter of our faith. Everything we do should point to Jesus. All our actions, all our words, all our ministries that we do together, they should all be about Jesus. For all the saints, he is above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and above every name that is named Jesus is the head over all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.  
Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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