

Lectionary B November 1, 2015 All Saints Day
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church Evansville, IN
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Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 24
Revelation 21:1-6a
John 11:32-44

Saints--Who?

Our Psalm this morning asks this question:

“ Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? ” Then it answers, *“Those who have clean hands and pure hearts...”*

And I respond by asking “Who on earth can fit that description? We all fall short of God’s glory. So what about saints? We are going to explore this subject with some information I found written by Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel, in his All Saints service called “ Saints Alive”.

<http://www.liturgybytlw.com/LessFest/StsAlive.html>

1. First of all Just WHO ARE SAINTS? According to the Bible:

Saints are heirs to God’s Kingdom Col. 1:12

Saints are members of God’s household – (Eph.2.19-20)

Saints are made holy – (1 Cor 1.2)

Saints are living – (Acts 9:32)

Saints are dead – (Mt.27:51-52)

Saints are from everywhere – (Rev.5:9)

2. Next WHAT DO SAINTS DO?

Let’s learn this that by example through the stories of the lives of some saints.

Take Moses, for instance). Except for Jesus, I don’t think anyone else in the Bible is more powerful. . He is everything that Cecile B. DeMille made him in "The Ten Commandments" and more. He had to be perfect right?

Well, lets go back to the burning bush and see. God talks to Moses from the burning bush, "... I have come down to deliver my people from Egypt and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt."

And Moses says, "Who? Me?"

"Not to worry," says God, "I will be with you."

Moses tries to find reasons why this won't work. "IF I come to the Israelites on your behalf and they ask what your name is, what shall I tell them?"

God doesn't let Moses off the hook, "I am who I am," "This is what YOU shall say to them. Go and assemble the elders. They will listen to you."

Moses is still not convinced: "Suppose they DON'T listen me and think I am going crazy?"

Well, shows him signs to use, like turning his staff into a snake. But Moses still had excuses "O my Lord, I am slow of speech and tongue; I have never been eloquent.

God bites his tongue and again says, "Not to worry. I will be with your mouth and teach you what to speak."

Moses then just comes right out with it, "O my Lord, PLEASE send someone else."

Uh Oh now God is upset. The Bible says, "Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." "Alright!" he says, "I'll fix it for you. We'll let your BROTHER do the talking. I'll speak to you, and you speak to him, and he will speak to everyone else. Are you SATISFIED?" God didn't wait for an answer. "Now pick up your staff and GO!" Moses did.

So what do Saints do according to Moses? They argue with God and they obey God.

And there's MARY

Jesus' mother Mary had her moments too. Mary was a frightened little girl who God called to be the Mother of Jesus. She willingly said yes. Saints are frightened and they say yes to God.

Those twelve disciples? Weren't they a real interesting bunch! They were with Jesus CONSTANTLY for three years, and STILL they didn't get it all right. Saints are dense. They are selfish. They are impulsive. They love Jesus and follow him.

MARTIN LUTHER

And as good Lutherans, we can't have a discussion about saints without talking about Martin Luther, right?

Luther had a little problem with his "unbridled tongue", and he got angry.

He called the pope and others who disagreed with him dunces, dolts, pigs, and those are the ones I can say in church. But Martin Luther's boldness changed the church. Saints say things in their anger, and they stand boldly for God's Truth.

Let's look at one of the modern day saints. Mother Teresa is one of the best known from our modern history. With all the good she did and the love she gave to the poorest of the poor, she had a very dark time in her life, where she doubted her faith. She said she couldn't feel God with her. Saints doubt their faith and they keep going.

I could give you lots of examples of imperfect humans, who God used, and none are worthy to stand on the hill of the Lord without Jesus' saving Grace.

That is the point. The good news that brings us here this day, grieving yet celebrating, knowing our loved ones are at home with Jesus now. Remember that list I read saying who saints are? There is one point that stands out to me. Saints are **made** holy. Being a saint isn't about being a perfect human being. That isn't possible. It has to do with what Jesus Christ does for us.

Jesus calls us out of our tombs. We come out dead and stinking and our shrouds are taken away. Jesus' blood purifies our hearts and makes us heirs of God's kingdom. Jesus makes saints out of regular imperfect human beings. And the imperfections aren't washed away. Human imperfections are part of what makes Saints so dear to our hearts. They are the reason we understand God's Love for us.

Martin Luther says we are sinners and we are saints, called to bring God's love to the whole world. That is God's perfect plan for us.

In Acts 1 when Jesus is getting ready to ascend to heaven, he looks at that bunch of doofuses he called disciples and he told them, "*...when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses...*" The Holy Spirit is in us, guiding and protecting us and with even in our most imperfect times, we are God's hands and feet in the world. For the Love of God!—that's our hope. That is the promise we cling to today as we read from Revelations from the Message Bible. "*Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone.*"

That is why we will leave here today with all God's Saints rejoicing in God's amazing love!
Amen.