

**Called to Sainthood**  
**Matthew 5:1-12**  
**November 5, 2017 – All Saints Sunday**

Friends, this is All Saints Sunday. All Saints Day is November 1<sup>st</sup>, the day after All Hallows Eve. It's a day that the church has set aside to recognize and remember those individuals that might be classified as "Saints" even though they are not officially named as such by certain denominations. And so the first question that arises is probably, "What is a saint?"

Oh we all know, there's Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, Saint Luke and Saint John, Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and all those many other people that, through history, the Catholic Church has officially recognized as Saints. But what about those unnamed saints? There have been times when I have referred to individuals within this church as "saints," and I have said that with all seriousness.

So I did what every good minister does when he's writing a sermon, I pulled the dictionary off my shelf and looked up "saint," and the first definition was "a holy person." So what's a holy person? I stated to our youth a couple weeks ago that "holy living" does not mean we spend our entire day in prayer. Still, the word "holy" means set apart, set apart for a special purpose, set apart for service to God. And, I believe that, as Christians, each and every one of us is set apart for holy living.

The traditional lectionary passage for All Saints Day is the Beatitudes. I preached on the Beatitudes earlier in the year as part of a sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. You might remember, at that time I said the Sermon on the Mount makes a pretty good guide for Christian living; and the Beatitudes are a great introduction to the Sermon. Traditionally, the Beatitudes all start with the word "Blessed." The Greek word is *mikarios*; it means blessed or fortunate. The Common English Bible actually translates the word as "Happy." Happy are the humble. Happy are those who desire righteousness. Happy are those who show mercy. Happy are the pure in heart. Happy are the peacemakers. Happy are the followers of Jesus Christ. Happy are the saints. Indeed it is good to live according to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of Peace.

I like the term "the saints of light." We have recently discussed the "I AM" saying of Jesus in the Gospel of John; and among the I AM sayings is Jesus' proclamation, "I am the light of the world." But you may remember in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world," and he calls his followers to let that light shine. You've heard me say before that I also like the word "radiate." I like to think of Christians as being so filled with the love of Christ that that love radiates from them.

I was once making a hospital visit at the Cleveland Clinic Main Campus. As I walked by one of the information people, and they read my clergy ID, they said, “I knew it! I can spot you guys a mile away.” I asked, “How is that?” He said, “You walk with a bounce in your step. I can spot you guys a mile away.” Well friends, it should not be only clergy that “walk with a bounce in their step.” I would like to think that every Christian is so filled with the love of Christ that they literally radiate that love to those whom they encounter. Radiate that love with a smile, a kind word, an exciting energy. I want folks to look at me and look at you and say, “They must be a Christian, and it must be good to be a Christian.” But let us not forget that being a Christian is about more than just attitude. Two weeks ago, on our Stewardship Sunday, I spoke about the generosity of time and resources; and I’m not going to repeat a stewardship sermon today. I simply note that some of the greatest happiness, some of the greatest blessing, some of the greatest *mikarios* comes from the giving of self, the giving of one’s resources, and the giving of one’s time in service to others and in service to God. And I again note that, whenever I speak of giving, I feel like I’m “preaching at the choir” for you, the congregation of this church, are hugely generous with both time and money. Indeed, we have many saints in our midst.

But today is not just about those saints among us. Today is most especially a day of memory and celebration of the saints that have gone before us. I have recently done a couple of funerals for people that I either did not know, or did not know well; and one of the blessings of a pastor is being able to sit down with the family of a recently deceased relative and remember and celebrate their life. Indeed, in many instances I have felt after such a meeting, that I did indeed know the person whose life we were celebrating; and, in many instances, that person was truly a saint, a holy person, a special person, set apart to share the love of Christ with those with whom they came in contact. These people truly are saints of light, shining with the light of Christ for all to see. And, the amazing thing is that, in many cases that light, the influence, the peace, and the love they shared, remains long after they have departed this earthly existence. Praise God for that. Indeed, because of these people, the world really is a better place, and we praise God for that.

So today we light candles to remember and to celebrate the saints of light. We light candles to remember and celebrate those who have gone before us. We light candles to remember and to celebrate the certain knowledge that we, one day will join them in the eternal presence, the warmth and the peace of almighty God, the source of all light, all goodness, and all love. Amen.

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