

# NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

All Saints' Day – November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 (11:11 am)

## THE SAINTS

**Psalm 149**

**1 John 3:1-3**

**Matthew 5:1-12**

### ***Saints Are Blessed in the Eternal Presence of Christ***

*"A great multitude ... from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages," cry out, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne" (Rev. 7:9-17). Faith-filled saints from every place and time, with unified voices, eternally magnify the Lamb of God. As His beloved children, we, too, "shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1-3). Joined with the throng of angels and myriad saints, we shall "serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:9-17). In our earthly tension vacillating between saint and sinner, faith and doubt, sacred and profane, we earnestly seek Jesus to calm our fears, comfort our spirits and forgive our sins. The Holy Spirit through faith in Christ propels us forward, fortifying us in Word and Sacrament, to our eternal home. In the midst of our constant struggle as believers, we need to be blessed. And so we are. The poor in spirit, the meek, the hungry, the thirsty, the merciful, the pure and the persecuted are all blessed, and we will most certainly inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:1-12).*

Today's topic is the saints. In English, the word "saints" has several meanings or nuances. Probably the most common meaning attached to the word "saints" carries with it the idea of a super Christian. This meaning of the word Saint emphasizes that the individual is head and shoulders above other Christians in terms of morality and service for the Lord and many other characteristics. This meaning of the word Saint emphasizes that the person is a rare commodity. Totally unusual. Not like the rest of us.

Another connotation is how the world views believers. How they see believers as people who do not make mistakes and how this sometimes causes an adverse reaction because often these people do not want to go to church because they understand that it is a place of "perfect saints" and how I am not so. This place is not for me.

This kind of confusion about the word Saint sometimes finds its way into the church. Some Christians think that they are better than other Christians. And they certainly feel like they are better than the unbelievers outside the doors. These folks come across like the Pharisee in the New Testament who was proud he wasn't like other folks who have failed so miserably in life. The Pharisee in the New Testament said, ***"Lord I'm glad I'm not like that other person. I tithe. I do everything I supposed to do."***

Then we move onto today's readings, and we see in **Psalm 149** a praise intending to worship the Lord with a new song, in a different way, focused on the God that is the HOLY God in the assembly of the godly (Saints). That is, there is a holiness in the church. **The big question is, what holiness is in the church?**

In any case, the psalmist asks here for the assembly to rejoice in this Holy God, to praise him in various ways and instruments because this God pleases the people and attends to the humble. **"Let the godly exult in glory. (v.5a)"** Again, reinforces that there is holiness within the church, and once again comes the question, **"What is HOLINESS here?"**

**Verse 9b** - **"This is honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!"** What saints are these? Is this referring to God's people? The **"sanctimonious"** perhaps? Who are these saints, and what is holiness?

**1 John 3** - Verse one says, **"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him."** Notice carefully what the apostle John is saying here. Christians are different. All Christians are **SAINTS**. The world doesn't know us. The world can't figure us out. They feel a separation from us. We certainly are different. An old translation of the Bible calls us **"peculiar people."** Peculiar means - unusual - unique - different - young people would say weird.

**Matthew 5:1-11** - this is Jesus' sermon on the Mount. This is the part of the New Testament that uses the word **"blessed"** several times in a row. Take a moment and think about Jesus' words here. **Just who is blessed?** First, the humble are blessed. The humble possess the kingdom of God, says Jesus. **Who also is blessed?** Those who weep over sin and evil. They will be comforted. The meek are blessed, as well. They will inherit the earth. **Who else is blessed?** Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They will receive what they seek. By God's grace. As a free gift.

**Who are these blessed ones?** They are the saints of Almighty God. **Where are these saints? Are they in one kind of church? What are they doing? They are hearing the Word of God. So who are the saints? Are they people who keep God's law, try to keep the law, who do good works?**

**So, who are these saints anyway?** Saints, in the biblical sense of it, refers to all Christians. Refers to all those who belong to Christ through faith in Him. They are the blessed ones of God. They are chosen by God and set aside for his holy purposes. They are consecrated for him. They are holy because they are declared so by God's grace in Christ. They don't deserve it. It's a gift of God's kindness. As the song goes, it's God's amazing

reckless Love in Christ. **So, who are these saints?** They hear the word of God and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, they keep it. They live a Christian lifestyle. They live in the world, but they are not of the world. They fix their eyes on Jesus, the author of the perfecter of their faith. They know they are just passing through this life on their way to heaven someday.

### **WHEN ARE WE NOT TO BE CONSIDERED SAINTS?**

We are not to be considered saints when we drift far from God's word. God's word gives us the peace and the strength we need to live a sanctified life here on earth – a life of humility, tolerance, being loving and forgiving toward others. We forfeit our status as saints when we rebel against God and his will, only let the world, the flesh, and the devil determine the direction of our lives.

**AND WHAT DO SAINTS DO?** They serve others. And they do it in love. They put the best perspective on things. They walk the extra mile. They love their enemies. They pray for those who persecute them. Now that's strange in the world's eyes, isn't it? That's strange. The young people are right – it's (*wuird*) weird. But that's the saints. Forgiven in Christ. Holy. Sanctified. Ambassadors of God's love. Their lives are characterized by the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience – the list goes on. God's Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts. Living out our identity as saints is pleasing to the Lord. He delights in us. But living out our identity as saints means that we step on the toes of the devil. And he is not pleased.

**WHO MAKES ME HOLY?** God himself. Remember, last week, we meditated on justification by faith – Martin Luther. Just is a person considered 100% holy to enter heaven by faith. God makes us righteous because of Christ. God makes us holy again. We were perfect saints when we were in paradise. Sin has entered, and you already know the whole story.

Then God, through Christ, sanctifies us and justifies us to enter heaven. God makes us HOLY, GODLY and SAINTS.

The following expression is a theological term in Latin – **SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR or SIMUL SANCTUS ET PECCATOR**. We are righteous and sinners at the same time. "Saints and Sinners" is our daily life as a Christian. We are continually fighting our sinful nature. But God gives us the strength to face it, and by faith, we are different, as the apostle John says. We are the holy children of God, and sometimes the world does not understand us because it focuses more on our inconsistencies on our wrong actions and sinful.

But, thank God, we all have forgiveness and follow the right path back to the Father. But still, we continue to be holy before God because He freely gives us that holiness by grace and goodness. Our life is and will continue to be a struggle against the forces that want to

keep us from God. And not some! **SIMUL SANCTUS ET PECCATOR**<sup>1</sup>, that is, we fall and rise, fall and rise again, we help, we forget, sometimes we cannot.

When you go home from church today and someone asks what did you learn, you can tell them that you learned a Latin phrase. It's a phrase that means, "We are at the same time 100% Saints and 100% sinners." We are Saints because Christ justified us at the cross. And sinners because the old Adam continually nags at us in this life. So there you have it. We are saints, but we are far from perfect. That's why we confess our sins each week in worship. It's not saints OR sinners. It saints AND sinners. We are both. To the core. Martin Luther counselled Christians to drown the old Adam in the waters of baptism each day. But he's a good swimmer and he keeps popping up! But don't let him control your life.

This life is a struggle. The world. The flesh. And the devil. Relentless adversaries. They never give up. We cannot let our guard down even for a moment. In Christ, we are saints. Not super Christians. Not exemplary believers. Not holier than thou like the Pharisee in the New Testament. We humbly serve the Lord. When we sin, we confess it and move on. Then we depend on the Lord's strength every day, all the time. The world around us is confused by the word saint. It's up to us too.

So, when somebody asks you, **"Are you a saint then?"** You can answer, **"absolutely, yes!"**

This is what you need to know. It's all from Christ. I've done nothing to earn it or deserve it. But that's what is grace is all about. And what I have, you can have also - for free. It will bless you in this life and provide you with a ticket to the next. Keep on trusting Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin and the Lord of your life. Your life will never be the same again. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.1517.org/articles/simul-iustus-et-peccator-what-does-this-mean>