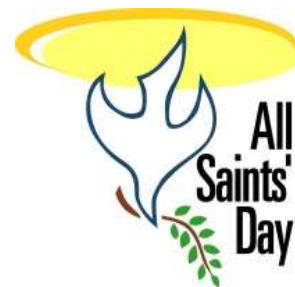


Faith Lutheran Church

Sunday, November 1, 2020
All Saints Day



Welcome

Before beginning Worship on this All Saints Day, I invite you to locate a candle, if you wish. I will invite you to light the candle (or turn it on if it is battery-operated) later in the service.

Call to Worship

We gather together in the name of the Father, and of the Son+, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

P) Come, all who are weary of wealth, of poverty, of power, of struggle, of division.

C) **Come, all who are heavy-laden with too much, with too little, with anxiety, with fear, with anger.**

P) Come, all who have hope for liberation, for peace, for freedom, for the kingdom.

C) **Hear these words, "See, I am making all things new."**

All) **Let us worship God.**

Call to Confession

Beloved, we are God's children now, but what we will be in the fullness of our time has not been revealed. What we do know is this: we will be like Jesus the Christ and the saints of God. Let us consider how Jesus was revealed among us and pray to be more like Christ in every way. As we gather today, let us confess our sins to God and one another.

Prayer of Confession (please join in confessing our sins)

Jesus embodied the unconditional love of God. Jesus fed those who were hungry. Jesus drew near to those living on the margins and excluded. Jesus brought healing and wholeness to those in need. Jesus hungered and thirsted for righteousness. Forgive us, God, for the times we have turned our backs on our sisters and brothers in Christ. We pray, may we be more like Jesus.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Beloved, through the love shown to us by Jesus, we can be sure that we are God's children now. The Spirit of Christ is among us in this gathering and the nature of Christ is revealed within us. We are becoming more and more like Christ each day. Therefore, let us live joyfully as God's people; saints, and instruments of God's way. In the name of Jesus Christ+, your sins are forgiven. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

Please join me in the Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, You have knit Your people together in one communion in the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow Your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys You have prepared for those who love You, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Readings and Psalm

- **Revelation 7:9-17** *The multitudes of heaven worship the Lamb*
- **Psalm 34:1-10, 22** *Fear the Lord, you saints of the Lord; for those who fear the Lord lack nothing.*

Second Reading 1 John 3:1-3

A saint is one who has been set apart by God for God's purposes. God, out of divine love, set us apart to be the children of God. Our holy hope is that we shall see God as God really is.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. ³And all who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:1-12

In the Beatitudes, Jesus provides a unique description of those who are blessed with God's favor. His teaching is surprising and shocking to those who seek wealth, fame, and control over others.

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ²Then He began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

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

Over the past couple of weeks, I've been listening to various podcasts on my computer. A podcast is a digital audio or video file that you can download on an electronic device – a computer, or phone, or iPad - and listen anytime to pretty much any topic. The ones I've been listening to lately are mostly about how to celebrate Advent and Christmas during this pandemic.

These are difficult podcasts to listen to when I think of the changes that will have to occur this year; no packed churches, most likely no singing of our favorite hymns, hearing from the gospel of John that Jesus is the light of the world without having the church filled with glowing candles.

It grieves me to know that Advent and Christmas will be different this year. In some of the podcasts I've listened to, the presenters have said that it is important to take some time to acknowledge things will be different and, as the holidays draw closer, to grieve what our traditions were in the past that we may not be able to celebrate this year. It grieves me to think of all the things that have had to change this year already and the things that will change that we haven't even thought about yet.

It grieves me to hear of loved ones and those dear to us who are ill and, because of the need to social-distance, we haven't been able to visit them, put our arms around them, give them words of comfort except on the telephone or through the mail. And for the dear ones who have walked on, their families are left to grieve without crying on our shoulder, feeling our physical support.

It grieves me to see the daily numbers increase of those infected with the coronavirus and those who've lost their battle with it. It grieves me to know that most likely those who walked on were alone, separated from their family.

It grieves me to see the state of this nation and this divisive political climate as we approach Election Day. We can take comfort knowing that, after next Tuesday, the negative ads on television will stop.

It grieves me today, this All Saints Day when we remember our loved ones who have walked on this past year. And it probably grieves me even more that, because of the coronavirus and the need to social distance, we aren't able to invite their families to come forward and light a candle in honor and memory of their loved one, a tradition that many churches have had for years. Instead, today, we will light one single candle to remember the loved ones from our congregations, our families, and our communities.

Needless to say, there's been a lot of grieving lately. This is normal from what I've heard and read.

I'd like to share with you some information I found on the Mayo Clinic's website regarding grief during this pandemic. If you type "Mayo Clinic COVID Grief" in your web browser, it will take you right to an article entitled "Coronavirus Grief: Coping with the loss of routine during the pandemic.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coping-with-coronavirus-grief..>

The article says, "As awful as it might feel, grief serves an important purpose. Grief helps you recognize that you've experienced a loss and that you're going to need to adapt.

To deal with your grief:

- Pay attention to your feelings. Name what you've lost due to the pandemic. It might help to write this down in a journal. Allow yourself to feel sadness or cry.
- Think about your strengths and coping skills. How can they help you move forward? Consider other tough transitions you've been through, such as a previous job change or divorce. What did you do that helped you recover?
- Stay connected. Don't let social distancing prevent you from getting the support you need. Use phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media to stay in touch with family and friends who are positive and supportive. Reach out to those in similar situations. Pets also can provide emotional support.
- Create an adapted routine. This can help preserve a sense of order and purpose, despite how much things may have changed. In addition to work or online learning, include activities that might help you cope, such as exercise, worship or hobbies. Keep a regular sleep schedule and try to maintain a healthy diet.
- Limit your news diet. Spending too much time reading or listening to news about the COVID-19 pandemic can cause you to focus heavily on what you've lost, as well as increase anxiety.
- Remember the journey. If you've lost your job, you don't have to let the way it ended define the whole experience. Consider some of your good memories and the big picture.
- Take comfort in creativity. Cooking, gardening, making art or being creative in other ways might help you feel better.

The article from Mayo Clinic concludes with this advice: Focus on the present and the things you can control. As you adjust, your feelings of grief are likely to lessen.

If you're having trouble coping with your grief over changes caused by the pandemic, consider seeking help from a mental health provider.”

I can tell you from personal experience that I had a conversation with my health care provider. He helped me realize that what I thought was all stress was a combination of *grief* and stress. I found it very helpful to understand that and it took me a little while to work through that.

Now, of course, as a pastor, you may expect to hear this from me, but I *did* find a lot of comfort in scripture.

Take, for example, our gospel reading today from Matthew 5. The Beatitudes. Jesus addresses His disciples and the crowd and offers these beautiful phrases that all begin with the words, “Blessed are...”

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, culminating with “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account.”

All of *the* people. *Those* people. The ones who are *also* called children of God. The ones who deserve our love and attention, our respect and honor. The ones Jesus calls us to care for time and time again.

And you know what? I notice *you* in these words of Jesus. I notice *you* in these blessings. I notice that this isn’t about all those *other* people. This is about you as well.

This day is for the saints of old and the saints sitting here or listening today. This day is about Jesus opening *our* eyes to the ones who have struggled to find a place in this world. The ones who have been forgotten. The ones who are lost. The ones who seek acceptance. The ones who are hungry. The ones who are often us. And the ones who have walked on.

This day - and Jesus’ words - give us joy as we recall wonderful memories. This day – and Jesus’ words – give us comfort as we acknowledge our loss and grief. This day - and Jesus’ words - give us hope. Because more than anything, this day was given to us by our God who loves us, and who sacrificed His only Son for us, so that one day we will all be together again. **Amen.**

Blessing

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

Prayers of Intercession

As I begin our prayers today, please light your candle when I say your loved one’s name or when you add your loved one’s name to our prayers.

Longing for Christ’s reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God’s power on the church, the world, and all in need. *A brief silence.*

Lord of all the saints, we praise You for evangelists and martyrs whose sacrifices witness to Your gospel across time and space. Inspire us by their courage to carry our faith to new people and places around us.

Lord of every place, the universe proclaims Your greatness from generation to generation. Bless the work of naturalists, conservationists, and park rangers who train our attention to the wonders of the world You have made.

Lord of every nation, guide this country—red states and blue states, rural voters and urban voters, young and old—as we share in another national election. Kindle hearts eager to understand our common needs and seek our common good.

Lord of every blessing, Your Son's blessing came to those living with poverty, grief, hunger, thirst, and persecution. Shape our vision of the saints to match His own. Awaken in us Your call to serve all who suffer.

Lord of healing, we continue to pray for all those who are affected by the coronavirus. We pray for those suffering in any way this day, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices at this time.....(please name your prayer concerns).

Lord of every venture, anoint us with the missionary spirit of the early church. Bless all new missions of our synod/presbytery. Empower testimony from new communities of faith to shape a diverse witness to Your saving power.

Lord of every time, countless are the multitudes You have called by name and gathered to Yourself. We light this one unifying candle as a symbol of comfort as we grieve those who have walked on in the past year, especially *Jane, Thomas, Bethel, Joy, Jeffrey, Lucille, Ruth Ann, Crandel, Karen, Bill, Richard*, and those whose name we share at this time...*(here the names of those who have died in the previous year may be shared)*. May this one candle also be a symbol of all our loved ones who have walked on throughout the years and whose memory we share today. In faith, may we join with them in ceaseless praise.

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when You gather all creation around Your throne where You will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Lord's Prayer

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Offering

It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry.

Offertory Prayer *(please join in prayer)*

We thank You, God, for coming to us as a neighbor, a stranger, an immigrant, binding our wounds and carrying us to safety, so that we might love You with all our heart, soul, and mind, and welcome the stranger, loving our neighbor as ourselves. Receive these gifts we lay before You in love. Amen

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sources:

www.presbyterianmission.org

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<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/search/label/All%20Saints>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/coping-with-coronavirus-grief..>