

## “CALLED TO BE SAINTS”

1 Thessalonians 2:9-13 Revelations 7:9-17

Today the church world observes what is called All Saints’ Day, The origin of this festival is unclear, but historical records indicate the Ephraim of Edessa composed a hymn around 359 that seems to suggest a commemoration of martyred saints. Different churches in various locations celebrated the passing of those martyred for the faith at different times. Today we are also beginning a four week sermon series on A Season of Saints. November 12<sup>th</sup> the topic will be “Stories of Saints,” and the next week, Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>, “Thanksgiving of the Saints.” Finally, on Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>, we will talk about “The Shepherd of the Saints.”

We tend to visualize saints as people who are “perfect tens” in all areas of life—flawless, extraordinary, somewhere between angelic beings and ordinary garden variety people. We believe they live on a superior plane, unsoiled by pettiness, liberated from anger, temper, and rage. Our minds think they would never bend, crack, or break in any situation. If burned at the stake they never feel the heat of the fire; put in Roman coliseums, they never feel the bite or the claws of the lion. Many believe they have unusual powers—even if they are dead. Then there is the rest of us!

Honestly, most saints would never think of themselves as saints—just ordinary Christians struggling to survive in an ungodly world. They would fit Jesus’ description in his compilation of sermons that we call the Sermon on the Mount. They include the poor in spirit (humble), the mourners, the hungry, the meek, the struggling, and the hurting. The real saints are not all about name-dropping, strength, overconfidence, or all-powerful.

These are the saints of God—not because they are great or accomplished

or anything close to perfect, but because they are beloved of the Lord, and because they have lived in that love. They are saints because they have been baptized into Christ Jesus, they have known and loved him, and they have walked his path of humble service. All Saints Sunday is not so much a celebration of mighty acts of faith throughout history; it is a celebration of God's love poured out on real people, yesterday, today, and always.

Let's look at how a saint looks and acts.

### **A Saint Worships God**

Two experienced Alpine climbers ascended the Alps with a novice climber between them. They clawed their way up the hazardous terrain for hours. Eventually reaching the summit, the lead experienced climber moved aside so that the young novice could catch the first breath-taking view. The rookie jumped to his feet on the mountaintop, completely ignoring the gale force winds that were blowing across. Suddenly he was grabbed by one of the experienced guides and pulled down. With the word ringing in his ears, "On your knees, sir! You are never safe except on your knees!"

True worship occurs when a person is spiritually on his knees in praise and adoration of the eternal God. Worship focuses on God. The human spirit stares directly on God without a blink. Worship honors God. The redeemed can do nothing but honor the One who redeems them through the blood of Jesus. His consistent love holds us on the roller coaster ride of life.

### **A Saint Understands God's Almightyness**

The One Supreme Ruler of the Universe is the God of the Bible. God's almighty-ness includes:

1. His Mighty Presence always! In life's darkest hours the Presence of God will *never* leave us or forsake us. God will continually communicate with anyone who has such a desire to do the same with him. He establishes contact with his people to encourage, restore, direct, and redeem forever, giving us hope.
2. His Mighty Knowledge always!! Though billions inhabit this planet God knows all by name, where they live, what's happening in their lives. What an awesome knowledge—what an awesome assurance!
3. His Mighty Wisdom always! God gives us understanding of the mind, the spirit, and the heart. We can boast in the Lord. He is the all-wise God!!

### **The Saint Stands in Awe of God**

The world's newest high-tech ship, the *Titanic*, inspired the awe of the turn-of-the century people. Her dimensions dwarfed the other sailing vessels of the day. The interior dazzled the passengers and her centerpiece Grand Staircase crowned the architectural wonder. The polished oak of the ship's wall paneling and the gilt of the elaborate balustrades shone brightly from the sun's rays passing through the glass dome. The persona or awe of the ship gave the passengers a sense of total security.

The grandeur could not endure the impact of an iceberg off the coast of Halifax.

People seem dazzled by the world's glitter of false grandeur and pay little to no attention to the majesty of God. The sparkle of glitter the world does offer does nothing but litter the ocean floor of the spirit. A saint's job is to pay close attention to the security of God's grandeur-magnitude, creation, mercy, hope, happiness, joy, peace, and life. With God as our ship we can stay afloat for eternity.

### **A Saint Grasps The Meaning of Eternity**

James Hewitt writes in *Illustrations Unlimited* about a minister preaching on

Heaven. He came to the end of his sermon and wanted the crowd's unanimous response to his question, "Don't you want to go to heaven?" All the people, except for a little boy in the balcony, raised their hands. So the preacher asked the little fellow, "Son, don't you want to go to heaven?" The youngster replied, "Sure, I do, someday, but I thought you were getting' up a load right now."

God's saints are ready for eternity. They shun hell. Many people have foolishly stated that if their spouse or friend is going to hell they want to go, too. The plain truth is there are no friends in hell, just total darkness. Paul writes to the Thessalonians in his second letter that hell is eternal destruction and exclusion from the God of love and mercy. Hell can be described as intense physical and mental anguish; intense loneliness—separation from everyone we love; intense feeling of permanence—forever; intense hopelessness—no escape.

God offers anyone a free ticket to heaven to escape the awfulness of hell. The ticket is the forgiveness of his Son Jesus Christ.

The Saint's reward is an eternal family reunion. God has planned a fantastic family reunion that's out of this world. But the reunion isn't about a geographical location. It's about people. Those whom we call brothers and sisters in this life know that there will *never* be a separation again. The One who has planned this outlandish happy reunion will be here—God! Jesus, who has made all this possible by dying on the cross to pay our way to the reunion, will be there, too. He will be the guest of honor at this great family reunion for all believers. The exciting news is that heaven is preparing for the great Homecoming Reunion now. Don't get lost!!!

### **A Saint Will Be Open to God**

Children love to play the game of "hide and seek" where a group of boys and girls

hide and one of the children finds the others.

In his book *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala says the devil's strategy with the Lord's people seems to be that they don't call, don't ask, or don't depend on God to achieve great things in their lives. It is similar to the children's game of hide and seek—except that it's from God. But Cymbala goes on to say that when a Christian lifts his heart to God, Satan's dominion will be damaged. That defines being open to God. Openness to God admits our dependence on him. Openness to God comes through prayer. Openness to God develops through obedience. Openness to God seeks truth.

Don't hide from God, but be wide open to his Presence and will for your life. With that open spirit God gives the saint a deep-rooted authentic power. Like the root system of a mighty oak, God and the Christian are entwined together, producing phenomenal power to do things beyond the wildest dreams. It is the power to resist temptation. The power to say no to the start of an office affair... no to alcohol when everyone else is doing it...to show love when it would be easier not to at that moment. It is the power to be an intercessory prayer warrior on behalf of others struggling in their spiritual, physical, mental, social, economic, or emotional walk in life. It is the power to have mercy when deeply hurt by others; power to have faith when the situation seems foggy; power to act despite the paralysis of circumstances; power to praise, honor, and glorify the King of Kings and Lord of lords!

To paraphrase Paul in Romans 1:7: "To all in the world who are loved by God and called to be saints..."

As we remember the great cloud of witnesses surrounding us and especially honor those saints who have gone before us, we stop and acknowledge the legacy they left us of loving God and our neighbors. Today we remember our dear brother, Glenn Hartman, who departed from us this past year. ...*Linda lights a candle in his memory.* Celebrate today the mighty acts of faith and the love poured out from God on ordinary people like you and me giving us God's sainthood!!! Amen.