

“Back to the Basics Part III: Christian Identity With a Grateful Heart” “Giving Thanks for That Great Cloud of Witnesses”

November 1 is All Saints in the Western Christian Calendar. November 2 is All Souls Day. Traditionally, November 1 was the day that the “recognized” saints were honored and November 2 was the day all believers were honored. In the Protestant tradition, All Saints is often celebrated on the first Sunday of November. We are beginning Part III of the sermon series, “Back to the Basics: Christian Identity With a Grateful Heart.” For the next four weeks, we will ponder gratitude and the church past, present and future. This week, we will spend some time being thankful for those saints in our lives: teachers, preachers, parents, friends, mentors, all those who have made a significant impact on who we are and who we are becoming. Those who have gone before created a path for us to follow and their light still shines on us today. May the love and grace they have shared make an impact on our church in this time and in the time to come. ---Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Giving Thanks for That Great Cloud of Witnesses”**”

Prayer for the Week

We give you thanks, O God, for all the Saints. We thank you for their words and deeds, character and strength, faithfulness and obedience. We thank you for the Saints who lived their faith every day, visiting the hospital rooms and prison cells, working the food pantries, volunteering at the homeless shelters, calling on the shut-ins, checking on the mourners, singing in the choirs, teaching our Sunday Schools. We thank you for the Saints who lived their faith every day. Amen.
(Taken from a prayer written by Reverend Stephen Brown)

Study Guide

Monday, 11/06/17 Hebrews 12: 1

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists names that those familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures (the ones we often call the Old Testament) would recognize. Those who went before were faithful to their calling in God and they were faithful even though they had not seen the fulfillment of the promise of God. In the words of the author, "...that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect." Somehow God is not content with only some being part of the kingdom, God wants everyone to be part of that great reign of justice and peace. Those who have gone before are surrounding us. *So, who belongs in your cloud of witnesses? List those whom you see as a saint in scripture, those in history and those in your personal history and say a prayer of thanks for the church of the past.*

Tuesday, 11/07/17 Hebrews 12: 1-3

Here are words of encouragement for a people who were afraid, distressed and persecuted. These words have been a great help for generations. It reminds all believers that God in Jesus has known shame, distress and persecution. This memory, this great strength of those who have gone before and those who now walk the path of strength enables believers to step out in faith. *List those "saints", those witnesses who you rely on in your life. Think of all the ways they have made a difference in your life. If it is possible today, write an e-mail or note, pick up the phone and call and tell them what they mean to you.*

Wednesday, 11/08/17 Hebrews 12: 12-15

From the strength given, believers are called to live out their faith. "Pursue peace with everyone...and see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God." Not only are believers strengthened by others, they are called to be the saints to others. *Following a contentious election, what does pursuing peace look like for believers? How is it that you pursue peace with everyone and see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God? Today, ask God to help you be a witness and a saint in the lives of others.*

Thursday, 11/09/17 Isaiah 65: 17-20

Obviously we are not the first generation that longs for a new heaven and new earth. For hundreds, thousands of years, people have longed for God to create a place of joy and love. Death comes to every people and every generation. Some deaths come after a long and eventful life, others come far too quickly or tragically. These verses give voice to the grief and sorrow of death and the longing and hope for a time when all will gather together in joy in that "new" place in the presence of God. *How do you imagine that new heaven and that new earth? How does your faith help you experience that promise in this time and place?*

Friday, 11/10/17 Isaiah 65: 21-25

On that mountain, (noted in Isaiah 25) God will wipe away all the tears and disgrace. People will "build houses and live in them. They won't labor in vain." This is the promise believers long for, the time when tragedy no longer strikes, where there is no more war or violence, no more pain or sickness. Where no one will "hurt or destroy." We can on occasion get glimpses of that reign of peace and justice. As believers we are called to give thanks and to call upon God who will help us live a life of thanksgiving, of faith and hope. *Today, spend some time giving God thanks for the glimpses of the kingdom and for all the people that help you see, hear and participate in it.*