

## *All Saints Day*

### *Reformation Sunday*

Rev. Dn. Jeanette Hile, Preacher

Let us pray;

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen

### *Love God- Love People*

Today is what I refer to as a trifecta Sunday. We celebrate the Reformation, All Saints Day, and recalling the two great commandments. To “Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and will all your strength.” The second is “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

That’s quite a bit to cover in one Sunday message, but if you will indulge me, I will attempt to summarize all this as best I can.

### *The Reformation*

First, we must explore brief history behind the Reformation and the celebration of All Saints Day.

Were it not for Martin Luther, there would be no Reformation no protestant church.

Born November 10,1483, Martin Luther's father had planned a career in law for his son. Luther however, responded to a higher calling if you will. In 1505, he entered a local Augustinian monastery and was subsequently ordained to the priesthood 1507. In 1512 he received a doctorate in theology and was appointed professor of biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg.

As a scholar, Luther began to question the Catholic Church practice of selling indulgences. He demanded his fellow scholars at the university to debate the 95 theses, (statements) which challenged the authority of the church and the pope concerning the selling of indulgences. Indulgences meant the church would offer people forgiveness of their sins if they would in return give money to the church.

This practice outraged Luther and on October 31, 1517 Luther posted on the castle church door in Wittenberg his statements for debate. Because he dared to question, he was excommunicated in 1521. He refused to recant and an edit called for his arrest. It was the prince of Saxony who saved Luther and helped him escape to safety.

Luther went on to marry, have six children and compose numerous hymns, introduce congregational singing and establish new models for worship service. He also would go onto translate the New Testament into his native German and begin translating the Old Testament. Luther died in 1546 at the age of 62.

### *All Saints Day*

Many scholars agree All Saints Day originated in Ireland approximately in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It quickly spread to England and the rest of Europe and was officially declared a feast day on November 1<sup>st</sup> in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

October 31<sup>st</sup>, All Hallows Eve through November 2, which includes ALL Saints and All Souls Day stems from the belief there is a powerful spiritual bond between those in heaven and those here on earth.

The protestant tradition of All Saints honors all Christians both past and present. Many churches light candles, ring bells, and read the names of those departed, especially during the past year.

## *Greatest Commandments*

In short, All Saints and All Souls Day is much like Easter as it is a celebration of Christ's victory over death, which leads us directly to the message in today's gospel reading—that is we should all love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

These actually are not new commandments at all. In fact, Jesus, in all his wisdom quotes the books of Deuteronomy Chapter 6:5 and Leviticus Chapter 19:18 to remind his followers that these are indeed the greatest commandments of all.

Now we can say we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and might. After all, here we are all here today, in the present sharing our love and worshipping God as a community, but one may ask, do we really love God without hesitation and without conditions?

I wonder.....

The same can be true of loving each other as we supposedly love ourselves. In this day and age where there is so much divisiveness and polarization, where tribalism flourishes, and respect for other another appear to be non-existent, how honestly can we say we love our neighbor much less ourselves?

For heaven's sake today flight attendants are being brutally attacked for merely doing their jobs. One must ask, what have we come to as a nation and society? Are we completely devoid of decency and respect towards one another?

Many years ago, essential reading, especially for of us entering the field of education were;

***“Living, Learning and Loving”***

***“Loving Each Other”***

Both books by the esteemed author/educator Dr. Leo Buscaglia.

Another essential read, albeit a children's book was;

***“The Little Prince”*** by the French author/philosopher, Antoine de Saint Exupery.

Recently, I dusted off those marvelous books and reacquainted myself with them. New meaning jumped out to me not only as an educator, but as an educator of the soul as well.

(If you have not read any of these books, I highly recommend you do so.)

Some poignant points from these books helped me to understand and digest Jesus's message in today's gospel.

For example, Buscaglia quotes from Saint Exupery in his book

“Living, Loving and Learning,”

Quote Saint Exupery,

“Perhaps love is the process of my leading you back to yourself.”

Buscaglia finishes that thought, “Not to whom I want you to be, (rather) but to who you (really) are.”

Buscaglia continues, “When asked to share three qualities of relationships respondents said the most essential qualities were;

*Affection*

*Forgiveness*

*Honesty*

Additional qualities were;

*Acceptance*

*Patience*

*Freedom*

Freedom to love ourselves and each other demands a great deal of work. It means we must be honest with ourselves. To admit our mistakes, to celebrate our triumphs and most importantly of all, to forgive ourselves as we forgive those who trespass against us. To be open to God's forgiveness and God's unconditional love for each and every one of us. It requires us to demonstrate true affection, forgiveness, honesty, acceptance, patience, healing, and yes freedom. Freedom to love and be loved. Then and only then can we truly embrace Jesus's simple reminder which is to love God- and love people.

**Amen**