

11/04/2018

“Thankful For All the Saints”

Scripture: Romans 1:1-8

All Saints Sunday

24th Sunday after Pentecost

† **Like Paul, we are thankful for all those who have received Jesus Christ through God’s Spirit and grace and have shared their witness and faith through their lives.**

Romans 1:1-8 (NRSV)

*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, ⁷ **To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world.***

Today we begin a **Month of Thankfulness** this year, although we know that being thankful should be an attitude that is expressed all throughout the year. We start, as many believers in Jesus Christ, by celebrating **All Saints Sunday** -- the Sunday following All Saints Day, which was November 1.

What do you think of when you hear the word “saint”?

In both Old and New Testaments, the words translated as “saint” from the original Hebrew or Greek imply holiness, faithfulness, devotion to God, God’s people and the like. As David’s psalm expressed for the dedication of the temple, “*Sing to the LORD, you saints of his, praise his holy name.*” (30:4 NIV)

You might recall pictures or images of some of the first followers and believers of Jesus, like Peter, James, John and the other Apostles. . . or Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, or some of the other women who were close followers and supporters of Jesus, as well. The reality is that all those who came to faith and followed the teachings and life of Jesus were considered saints.

This, along with the Apostle Paul, who came to believe in Jesus only after Paul had been a persecutor of those who had believed before him, is recorded in the Book of Acts (9:13), in which Luke says:

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹ And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.” ¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. . . .”

Only later, as the church grew much larger, did the designation become more specifically used of faithful Christians who often performed miracles by the Holy Spirit, and even died as martyrs to spread the gospel like the early apostles.

Let’s watch this short video of what Rev. Don Underwood says United Methodists believe about saints . . . <https://youtu.be/d-7TcYn-MNg>

Now let’s briefly consider the opening words of Paul’s letter to the early believers in Jesus at Rome.

† **Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God**

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord . . .” (Romans 1:1-4)

Paul informs those believers that Jesus was born as a human being, descended from David, an Israelite. He was also declared, recognized or acknowledged to be the Son of God. Further, Christ’s power was according to, or by, the spirit of holiness – or the Holy Spirit. And, that he was resurrected from the dead by that same power. It is Christ Jesus who is now our Lord.

† **Beloved of God . . . Called to be Saints**

Paul says to those believers in Rome, as he would say to us today:

“ . . . ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷ To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:5-7)

We can be thankful and glad that we are called to belong to Jesus! We should be thankful to be loved by God! We should be thankful to be called among the saints – the faithful in Christ!

† **Proclaimers/Followers of Faith in Jesus**

And finally, as Paul says:

“I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed

throughout the world.” (Roman 1:8)

When we think about all the hardship, hatred, suffering, pain, and yes, evil in this world, we can be thankful that there have been those throughout the centuries who have been faithful witnesses to God’s love, compassion, righteousness and peace, as was Jesus. Some were or are well known, and others just simple, seemingly ordinary people.

That is not to say that all those who have or do profess to be Christian really act like Christ. Most, including myself, are not yet perfect. And, even many atrocities in his name, or using it as a pretense, have caused great suffering as well. Yet, we can be thankful for those – like Christ – who lead the way. By repentance and seeking to make amends we may hope to bring healing and reconciliation. And that, all the more, is what it means to be called to be saints – proclaimers and followers of faith in Jesus Christ.

So, who has been a “saint” (shared the life of Jesus) with you? When, how and why?

How have you or do you share the life of Jesus with others?

May we always be thankful for those who have come before us, who have shared and shown God’s love and life as, and in, Jesus Christ our Lord!