

A Midweek Lenten Series Created for Community

Week 2 March 3rd In Community with All the Saints

Welcome and announcements

Welcome to worship. We will not share Holy Communion in these Wednesday services. This Sunday St. Mark's will worship indoors with masks and social distance protocol. Please let the office know if you plan to attend. The March newsletter details the worship schedule on line and in person for Lent and Holy Week. This week we explore how we were created for community with all the saints.

Prayer Week 2

Timeless One, you renew your promises in every generation. Deepen our awareness of the communion of saints who have gone before us, the saints in our own time, and the saints who will carry on your message of grace after us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul speaks to the church in Ephesus

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason
16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Mark 9:2-8 Jesus is Transfigured on the Mountain

Jesus is in conversation with those who have gone before him

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

Homily (Short message)

Jesus stands on the mountain top with his relatives Moses and Elijah. As a Jewish man descended from David connected to all the Hebrew people, Jesus is seen by the disciples as the shining God he is with this ancestors beside him. Jesus knew the books of Moses and the ascension of his ancestor Elijah. This story of transfiguration reminds us all that we do not stand alone in our faith. We have been surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who share the love of God, the good news of new life in Christ Jesus and direct us to the Holy Spirit of God in and around us.

Some religious traditions distinguish between saints, who obey God's will, and sinners, who disobey. Others refer to saints as super-holy people. Regular Christians like you and me aren't necessarily bad, but we haven't done anything extraordinary enough to be called saints. The

Lutheran confessions define sin as the self-centered failure to trust God (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article II). Adam and Eve's problem wasn't just that they ate a piece of fruit or broke one of God's rules. Their real sin was their desire to be "like God," relying on their judgment rather than trusting God's word. For us, too, our specific sinful behaviors are only symptoms of this self-centered condition that theologians call "original sin." Martin Luther describes Christians as "simultaneously saint and sinner." This both/and approach is a distinctly Lutheran understanding of who we are in God's eyes. Luther calls Christians "simultaneously saint and sinner" because he redefines "saint" as a forgiven sinner. We are called saints not because we change into something different but because our relationship with God changes as a result of God's grace. Luther said: "The saints are sinners, too, but they are forgiven and absolved."

When someone in the Christian faith dies we refer to them as saints. Who are the saints in your life? Who stands with you in your cloud of witnesses. Those who have died in my life that stand in the cloud with me are my father, my childhood friend Cecilia, my grandparents, in-laws and others that I would hope to be reunited with. Who stands in the cloud on your mountain top. They are our saints although like us, they were sinners. They have received the grace of God and so will we.

We are created to be in community with all the saints. This is what the church of God looks like. Saints and sinners standing with each other in this world and the next. Thanks be to God!

The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Prayer for All the Saints

United with the saints of every time and place, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation. **A brief silence.** Almighty God, in your great love and forgiveness, you call us your saints. Direct us now in your way of servanthood so that the whole world will know your unending love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Life-giving God, you shower your creation with blessings of abundance. Sustain us with your blessing, so that we never cease to protect and find joy in your creation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, you look upon the lowly and call them blessed. Bless the poor, the hungry, and those who suffer persecution. Comfort those who mourn, those having to make hard decisions, those who are lonely, and all who are in need **(especially those who are homebound, are in care facilities, assisted living and recovering from surgeries).** Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Merciful God, you redeem your people and seal us with the promise of your Holy Spirit. Guide the newly baptized as they embrace their new identity as holy children of God. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for all the saints who have gone before us. Those in our community who have died this year **(especially Barb Bowen, Gary Parke and those who we have known in the community of St. Mark'. For the over 500,000 who have died in our country with the corona virus. For all those family and friends that have gone before us who shared their faith).** Through their faithful witness, we continue to set our hope on Christ Jesus. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Rejoicing in hope, we lift our prayers to you, most gracious Lord, trusting that you have received them in your care. **Amen.**

Blessing

The Creator who fashions us together with all things,
the Christ who leads us into a new beloved community,
the Spirit who holds us in the communion of saints,
one God, ✠ bless you now and always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace, joined together in Christ.

Thanks be to God.