**SUNDAY 11/7/21**

**SERMON**

**JOHN 11:32-44**

Jeremy and his father were running errands early Saturday morning.

When they were almost finished, they stopped at their church

 so Dad could pick up some paperwork he needed.

The sun was streaming in through the stained glass windows.

Jeremy enjoyed looking at the beautiful bright colors.

He was curious about the people and asked:

“Who are all the people in the windows, Daddy?”

"They are Saints," Dad answered.

"What are Saints Daddy?" he asked.

The father was stuck.

How was he going to explain who Saints were to a six year old?

While Dad was wondering what to say,

 Jeremy suddenly called out:

 "I know who Saints are Daddy,

 they are the people who let the light shine through them."

Quite often we think of saints as very well-known people

 from the past such as

 Saint Francis or Mother Teresa, St. Augustine or Peter and Paul.

But in the Bible, a Saint is simply someone who follows of Jesus.

We normally think of Saints as those people who led exemplary lives.

 and other committed Christians whose faith in God

 did not spare them from the peril of history and demanded their lives.

But their hope was placed in the heavenly life to come.

They are the ones who let God's light shine through them.

The people described as saints in the Bible were still very much human.

They were called, they were holy, and they were dedicated to God.

But they were still real people, far from perfect.

They were fishermen, farmers, tent makers, doctors, teachers, carpenters,

 former prostitutes, outcasts, robbers.

They weren't infallible, and sometimes they disagreed with one another.

They weren't perfect by any stretch of the imagination.

They were on a journey,

 a journey of following Jesus,

 and learning to be more and more like Jesus,

 becoming more and more loving,

 less and less judgmental,

 more and more accepting of others,

 and less and less condemning of others.

Saints are not always perfect.

Saints often fall down, but they get back up again.

Saints may fall into sin, lose their temper, hurt another by word or deed,

 but a Saint asks God for His forgiveness.

A Saint may not always love their enemies, but it is their goal.

They ask God for His help to overcome their anger and hatred.

When they find it difficult to pray for those who mistreat them,

 they pray anyway.

It isn't always easy, and often seems impossible, but they keep on trying.

A Saint is someone whose life makes it easier

 for others to believe and trust in God.

St Paul writing to the Church addressed followers as

 "the saints at Philippi" or to "the saints at Ephesus",

 or "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be Saints".

They, and we, are not Saints because we are without sin.

We are Saints because we struggle to live God's way.

Today we are celebrating All Saints Day.

We remember those who are no longer with us.

We remember what they taught us, by their words and actions.

Like all of us, they weren't perfect, but they were precious in God's sight.

Martin Luther used to say: We are at the same time Saint and Sinner.

Pope Francis said:

 To be Saints is not a privilege for the few,

 but a vocation for everyone.

 It is not a mission only given to a small, collected group of people.

We are all called to be Saints and live as an example of God's Word.

It was recess time at school.

The children were playing and having a good time.

But soon some of the boys began teasing one another.

Then Sheila walked by heading for the swings.

Immediately the boys began to pick on her, taunting and teasing.

She was the only child in their class who was adopted.

"You don't even know your real parents," Bobbie shouted at her.

"You're just adopted," Timmy chimed in.

Then Brad yelled out, "You don't even have real parents!"

Sheila turned and walked away.

The boys all laughed, expecting Sheila to burst into tears.

But Sheila stopped and turned around and said,

 "Oh, yeah? Well, I feel bad for you.

 When you were born, your parents felt like they had to keep you.

 My adoptive Mom and Dad actually wanted me.

 They chose me to be in their family,

 because they loved me."

Suddenly the boys were silent.

They couldn't think of anything to say.

As we come to another All Saints Day Festival,

 we again hear the words of John's first letter:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us,

 that we should be called children of God."

Not just "people" of God;

 not simply "followers" of God;

 not only "servants" of God;

 though these are all true.

It's far more intimate than that.

 "See what kind of love the Father has given to us,

 that we should be called Children of God."

On this All Saints Day, we celebrate the wonderful reality

 that we are children of God -- brought into His family through adoption.

Through no doing of our own, we are children of God.

And, like Sheila, each of us can say of our adoption:

 "God the Father actually wanted me in His family,

 and I know it!

 He chose me to be in His family, forever."

Our Heavenly Father wanted each of us to be in His family so much,

 He sent His only Son to make it happen.

He calls each of us by name.

He calls us his Saints.

He calls us His children

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us,

 that we should be called children of God.

 And so we are."

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

  He will dwell with them;

  they will be His people,

  and God Himself will be with them;

 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

AMEN