

All Saints Sunday 2020
Rev. 7.2-4,9-14///1John 3.1-3///Matthew 5.1-12

→There is a story told about two brothers who lived in a particular town where they were involved in corruption, deceit and every manner of vice.

→It was even rumored that they were affiliated with some very famous organized crime families.

→[now] whatever the case may be, both brothers had accumulated much wealth throughout their lives by their dishonest means.

→and so there was little grief in the town when the older brother died.

→however, his younger brother, wanting to honor his elder sibling, went all out in planning the funeral.

→the problem [however] was finding a minister willing to do the service, given that neither of them had ever graced the steps of a church.

→Knowing that the one of the local churches was in the midst of a capital campaign for some much needed repairs, the younger brother decided to call upon its minister.

→"Reverend," he said, "I know my brother and I never attended your church, as a matter of fact we never attended any church. I also know that you've probably heard a lot of things about my brother and myself, this being a small town and all, but I'd like you to do my brother's funeral.

→and if during the service you'll say he was **"a saint."** I'll write you a check for \$50,000!. That'll go a long way to fixing up the church...don't you think?"

→well after some thought, the pastor agreed to have the service under one condition:
the \$50,000 had to be paid in advance. And so it was...

→[Now] on the day of the funeral, the church was very crowded. Curiosity had
brought dozens of people to the service, who certainly were not there to honor the dead
brother, but more so to see what the minister would actually say.

→The service began with the usual scriptures, hymns and prayers - and then came time
for the sermon.

→The minister began slowly, but then step by step launched into a litany of the
horrible things the rich dead man had done, how he had been selfish, and greedy, and
corrupt, caring about no one but himself, carousing with women, drinking excessively,
and so on.

→[well] as you might expect...the younger brother, sitting in the front pew, was getting
quite hot under the collar about how the minister was not fulfilling his promise but during
the service there wasn't much he could do about it except to wait and hope that the
minister would keep his end of the bargain.

→Finally, after about ten minutes of outlining the rich man's flaws, the minister
concluded his sermon in a booming crescendo proclaiming:

→"**Yes my friends, this man in this coffin was a no-good, dirty, rotten
scoundrel! But, compared to his brother, he was a saint!**"

PAUSE

→Today is All Saint's Day – a feast day that has been celebrated for hundreds of years within the church, particularly within the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches, but in many others as well.

→When people think of the saints, they often think of people like Paul, or John or James, and the other apostles; or they think of people like St. Francis, St. Teresa, St. Catherine, St. Bernadette, or St. Ignatius of Loyola.

→In short...they think of those people that the church has long declared to be saints

→whose faith and vision and moral integrity have been thoroughly examined and widely known;

→those who have been judged to have advanced the cause of Jesus Christ and who have been deemed to be worthy of such imitation.

→And it is true...**that those** the universal church has declared - after much examination and debate – to be saints are indeed....saints.

→but taking a closer look...we realize that these wonderful saints are only bright examples of something that is very common – namely examples of a deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ

→something that we too have been called to be [bright examples to one another of a deep faith we have in Jesus Christ]

→and the Beatitudes clearly sum up what sainthood is all about and what our lives should be about as well..

→the Beatitudes express what sainthood is

PAUSE

→the word Saint comes from the word “Sanctus” – which we translate as "holy".

→[thus] Saints are - people who are holy

→ people set apart from the rest because of their belief and faith in Christ Jesus

→but what is most striking is that the qualities of sainthood are rather very common and every day...

→saints are normal people who differ from most others in this world,

→not because of their moral integrity,

→ but because of the depth and strength of their faith and how they live it,

→i.o.w.....a saint is someone who is set apart...whose life is dedicated to the worship of God and doing the will of God in their lives.

→a saint is someone who inspires others to know and follow Christ Jesus.

PAUSE

→[you know] very often...we make the mistake of thinking of saints as those distant and separated from us...

→we say and think things like... “ we could never be like them” or “we are not worthy.”

→yet what Jesus tells us through the Beatitudes today is that sainthood is possible for all of us through our witness to Christ’s presence in our lives....

→think for a moment about the saints in your life-- not the famous ones - like Saint Paul or John ...or Theresa, or Catherine, or Francis...///....think [rather] of the saints who have touched your lives

→those who have inspired in you a deeper faith in God,

→ of those who have made you want to bless the God they believe in...

→those whose love and testimony have awakened something in your soul.

→the people who care for others /// /who help those in need /// /take care of the poor /// advocate for the disadvantaged....the old and young, the rich and poor, the workers and thinkers...

→sainthood isn't a job for which you apply...there isn't a resume to build...it's not an election to be won...a trophy to be given or a diploma to be earned

→a true saint is focused on God...and upon the importance of living a life shaped by the presence of Christ...

PAUSE

These are the people we honor this day....

the saints living and the saints dead...

the saints who live among us and the saints who have gone before us ...

today we honor.....

the saints...

that one day we hope to become