

All Saints' 11/3/24  
Matthew 5:1-12

“REJOICE AND BE GLAD, FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN”

Today, we observe All Saints'. So, let's play a little game of pretend. Pretend that you have a notebook and pencil. With that notebook and pencil in hand, draw a picture of a saint. *[PAUSE]* Well, what does your picture look like? Or, would it be better to ask: Who does your picture look like?

Maybe it is of a person in white gown, a halo around their head, and wings on their back. Maybe it is a picture of some great Biblical character such as Moses, David, or Paul. But, could your picture be a self-portrait -- a picture of you?

On All Saints', we remember those who rest from their labors in the mansions of heaven and wear the crown of life. We thank God for showing us these examples of His mercy, revealing in them His desire to save us poor sinners. But, we also rejoice that we are saints. "Saint" means "Holy One." We are the holy ones of God because He has washed away all of our sin in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. When you draw a picture of a saint, it is quite appropriate that your picture should be a picture of you.

I. But, before you do draw that picture of a saint, draw another picture: A picture of yourself as you are by nature, apart from Jesus Christ. This is the picture you may not be very proud of. This would be the picture you would not want anyone to see.

What do you look like apart from Christ? By nature, you are a lost and condemned sinner. Remembering you are a sinner, you may think of drawing a picture of yourself in a little red suit, horns, and a pitchfork. That's the way we like to think of sin, isn't it? As something laughable,

something we can just smile and shrug off. In fact, we may even be proud of our sin and hold it out to impress others. But, is this a true picture of a sinner?

We need to remember what sin is. Sin is rebellion against God. It is not very funny. It cannot be easily shrugged off. Examining ourselves in the mirror of God's law, we see that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against God in our thoughts, words, and deeds. By nature, we are all just plain evil. No matter what sin we show in our lives, sin is sin, it is all the same to God. It is all rebellion against the Creator of heaven and earth and deserves death.

Would we even want such a picture of us to exist? Most certainly not. Yet, when we see ourselves apart from Christ, we realize what a desperate situation sin has left us in and we have no hope within us.

II. God, in His love, did not leave us to perish in our sin. He sent His only-begotten Son Jesus into this world born of virgin mother. In Jesus, there was no hardness of heart or rebellion; there was only innocence and purity, which meant that He could perfectly obey His Father's will. The Son obeyed the Father's will by having the sin of all the world placed upon Him to carry that sin to the cross. God's own Son paid the price for our transgression and rebellion with His innocent death on the cross of Calvary. The innocent Lamb of God shed His blood to cover over our sin, which means, My Friends, that we are forgiven.

III. Baptized into Christ, we wear His own holiness and purity as our very own. The Bible teaches us: *All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ (Ga 3:27)*. Cleansed by His blood, we stand before God, no longer wearing the filth and guilt of our sin, but clothed in

the white robe of Jesus Christ. When God looks at you, He does not see your sin. He sees only the pure, holy righteousness of Jesus Christ.

So, draw a picture of a saint. Go ahead -- draw yourself as God sees you. Your picture could be of any Christian, anyone united to Christ through faith. A saint, Dear Friends, that's you and me, those who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

All Saints gives us the opportunity to remember the work saints have done for Christ and His Church. We must understand correctly that we do not pray to the saints or ask them to forgive our sins. The saints that have gone before us to heaven do not have magical powers, there is nothing mystical about them. They are just human beings--like you and me--who confessed Jesus Christ. The saints are not mediators between God and us. The Bible teaches us that there is only one mediator between God and men -- Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Tm 2:5). It is to Him that we turn for forgiveness and grace to help us to fight the good fight of faith.

But, we do remember the lives and work of the saints. In the lives of the saints, we see the great things God can accomplish in human lives.

Are you burdened with guilt? Does the evil foe continually bring to your remembrance memories of past transgressions? Then take comfort from the lives of the saints. When you see Peter forgiven after denying Christ and David forgiven after his adultery with Bathsheba, we know that God does indeed forgive. In seeing God forgive the failings of the saints, we rejoice that God's grace does indeed abound more than sin and we take comfort that as He has forgiven them, He will forgive us.

Are you in the midst of a severe trial? Is that valley of the shadow of death very dark and deep for you this day? Then, take courage and strength from the lives of the saints. Remember how God used the

treachery and deceit of his brothers to work good in the life of Joseph. Remember how God gave David victory over the giant Goliath. Remember how God gave Elijah strength for his earthly journey. Remember how God shut the mouths of the lions to keep Daniel from harm. Remember how God's grace sustained Paul as he struggled with his thorn in the flesh.

Are you in a time of indecision in your life? Then remember St. Jonah. In His own way, God may be calling you to go to your Nineveh. God may have need of you as He did Paul. God will not have a whale swallow you or appear to you on the road to Damascus, but trust in His good and gracious will for your life. God will get you where He wants you, where you can best serve Him.

Perhaps, it is easier for us to understand All Saints' Day if we look at it this way. Once again, taking your notebook and pencil in hand, write the titles of the 5 best sermons you have ever heard, those 5 sermons which have made the greatest impact on your life. **[PAUSE]** Now, you are all looking at me with these looks on your face like he can't be serious. Is it that hard to remember a good sermon? Then, let's try this. Write the names of the 5 people who have influenced your Christian life the most. Ah, now it is much easier! Immediately, we are able to think of a spouse, our parents, our grandparents, a pastor, a special Sunday School teacher.

In Galatians, Paul writes: *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Ga 2:20).* Saints lived out their faith in their thoughts, words, and deeds. The best way that we can remember and honor the saints is to imitate their faith in Jesus Christ and daily live out that faith.

They overcame and buried sin in their lives. As we look at their lives, we see that we, too, can overcome sin to serve God. As they walked by faith through this valley of the shadow of death, we can do the same. As they fought the good fight of the faith and took hold of eternal life, we see that we can do the same. As they were faithful unto death and received the crown of life, we follow in their footsteps so that we too will one day wear the crown of life.

When we see Aaron holding up the prophet's hand, when we see Eunice raising her son Timothy up in the Christian faith, when we see Tychicus faithful in helping Paul, we know that we too can serve God where He has put us.

So, draw a picture of a saint. Rejoice in the goodness of our Father. He has united you to Christ in your baptism. This means that when you draw a picture of a saint, you may, with happy heart, draw a picture of yourself.