

November 7, 2021
All Saints Day

“God Gives Good Gospel”

1 John 3:1-3

Today is a day for us to perceive the Gospel. When you’re talking about All Saints Day, there really isn’t going to be a whole lot of Law hanging about. It’s all Gospel. After all, “saints” is another way of saying “holy ones”. And holy ones are those who have “*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.*” There is no fear of the Law for the saints triumphant, for they have finished the race that is this earthly life and their souls dwell unblemished in the very presence of God.

Today’s epistle lesson though, is clearly aimed at the saints still living that earthly life in the world broken by sin, those we call the church militant, us. For us the Law is certainly still an issue. It shows us our sin and drives us to repentance and forgiveness. It guides us as we struggle to live lives that are pleasing to God and that give the Savior honor and glory. Yet, washed by and into Christ in our Holy Baptism we are still saints, holy in the sight of God.

John’s exhortation is for us to see this.

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

This is all Gospel good news. It is the love of God for us, that He has given to us in Christ, that has been effective in changing us, giving us who were dead to God a new life in which we are more than just mere human, we are adopted children of God. We are in Christ, the Son of God. We are strangers to a world that is perishing apart from God because, like Christ, our kingdom is now not of this world. Because of the Father’s love for us we are yet in this life, eternal saints. We each day should see ourselves in this blessed light.

Yet John also encourages us with the promise of what is yet to be seen: “*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*”

We, who are sinners and saints all at once, have a future yet to be revealed. Quite frankly, I read this as a future also for the saints triumphant, those who have passed from this life whose souls now dwell in the very presence of Christ. I say this because it is on the Last Day, when all the dead are raised, that everyone in their physical body will be able to physically see Christ—gaze upon Him with their very physical resurrected eyeballs—and know Him perfectly up close and personal. And it is on that day that we will be like Him; a perfect, holy, glorified body-and-soul human being as God has always desired us to be—His children.

So we who know God’s love in Christ and in faith look forward to His reappearing have a special perception of God through His Word and Sacraments that results in a very particular attitude toward life: certain hope. And such certain hope necessarily results in a life living out our hope in Christ. “*And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*”

“Purifies himself” sounds like law, something we must do, but in this context, again, it is all Gospel. Peter is simply saying that seeing the love of God in Christ and what it has done to us, and looking forward to Christ’s reappearing, we live lives in Christ: lives of continual faith unto repentance that is constantly receiving His forgiveness and thus being purified by Christ through those means He has given us to deliver the goods. And that is what we’re here doing right now; receiving the gifts in the Word proclaimed, in our Baptism remembered, in the

absolution of sins pronounced, in the Supper of Christ's body and blood. We are indeed being purified as He is pure! It's...all...Gospel!

Yet, if you're like me, even in the midst of all this wonderful good news of God's grace being proclaimed, there is a little voice screaming in the back of your mind. Maybe not here and now, but at times throughout your days, it speaks up. It's the law, or maybe more rightly stated it is Satan using the law; using it to accuse.

"You hypocrite!" it shouts. "You aren't a saint; a holy one! Look at what you've done, what you've said, what you've thought. You're evil! You're no Christian! What child of God would dwell upon such depraved thoughts of anger, greed, lust, envy and malice? Would someone purified do or say the awful things that come from you? You're not pure. You're polluted."

That's scary because it's kind of convincing, right? That sinful nature sticks to us and we see it, and it looks anything but pure and holy. There is enough truth in Satan's accusation to lead us to doubt our sainthood, to doubt that we are children of God. Then seizing on that doubt, the temptation is to see Jesus not as the Savior, but as the righteous judge with that flaming sword intent on smiting our wickedness. The temptation is to see God in all His holiness and purity and know that we stand blemished by the sin He can never abide in His presence.

"We shall see him as he is." This is a key phrase here. On the day of Christ's appearing, the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, we shall see Him as He is. And how is it the He is? Righteous? No doubt. Holy? Most certainly. Standing in judgment? Absolutely, they don't call in Judgment Day for nothing. But what is that judgment? *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

See Jesus rightly! He is Gospel! He is good news! Sure, there is some truth to the devil's accusations. We are plagued by a sinful nature in a broken, fallen world. We are sinners. But what is the greater truth we behold?" *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us..."*

The kind of love the Father has given to us is Christ crucified! We see Him as He is—crucified! Dead on a cross with all of our sins! Dead in the grave with all of our sins! Now risen to eternal life with none of our sins! Let Satan scream and rail all he will! Those sins lie powerless in the wake of the crucified Christ, they are dead in His tomb. And He reigns in glory!

We today by faith see Him as He is—Gospel good news of salvation. He is the last word when it comes to our sins and that word is "paid in full".

To purify yourself as He is pure really boils down to seeing this, seeing Jesus as He is and continually running to this manifested grace of God—this person Jesus who has done all the work it takes to make you a holy one; a saint.

And yes, that will and should manifest itself in your life here as a saint. But that's going back to a good use of God's good law...and let's not do that today, because today is all about Gospel. Today is all about saints. And, as saints, today and every day is all about Christ crucified who has made us so. *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."*

Amen.