

November 6, 2022

All Saints Sunday

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

“When we remember”

1. I never knew my grandparents.
 - a. They had all died by the time I was born.
 - b. My two grandfathers were saints of the church, if not particularly little angels
 - i. My Mom’s dad was a beloved barber, even though he struggled with alcoholism his adult life. He was a talented musician and even sold guitars he made from scrap wood.
 - ii. My Dad’s dad was an industrious rancher, though he had a temper which he struggled to control. He showed tremendous courage in the face of death several times during the Mexican civil war.
 - c. Though I didn’t know them, their spiritual (and physical) legacy continued in mom and dad, and in my siblings and me.
 - i. I didn’t know them so as to remember them, so the stories my parents told had to be the only memories I could collect for myself
 - ii. I also came to know how they shaped the lives of my parents, who lived out the faith, and also worked to overcome their parents’ shortcomings in their own lives
 - d. As we have experienced in worship already, today is a day when we remember and celebrate the life of the faithful on All Saints Sunday
 - i. First a let me say something about the word “Saint”
 - ii. It is used for someone deemed Holy, that is to say, someone set apart for a particular purpose
 - iii. In that sense, then, we believe that each one of us has been set apart by God for a particular purpose or task
 - iv. To be a saint in this context isn’t to be perfect, but it is to know and lean into the idea that God is asking us to be part of God’s plan for humanity.
2. Our passages today are about people whom God had set apart for very specific work on with God’s people
 - a. In the Gospel Jesus mentions the patriarchs
 - i. Of course, no one alive at the time of Jesus would have known Abraham or Sarah or Hagar, because they had been gone for centuries.

- ii. But that's not where the conversation started.
 1. The Sadducees, who were the religious leaders connected to the priesthood and to the temple in Jerusalem, were trying to ridicule Jesus about the resurrection of the dead (they didn't believe in it)
 2. So they present Jesus with a scenario where, in order to provide a descendent to a family, brothers marry in succession the widow of their oldest brother (with every brother dying before being able to have a child with the woman).
 3. They pose the challenge: In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?
- iii. As is often the case, Jesus doesn't answer the question head on
 1. You're trying to limit who God is!
 2. The burning bush story (which the Sadducees would have believed in) says God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – but God is the God of the living! To God they are alive in a spiritual way which we cannot begin to understand.
 3. And so they too should be alive for us in some spiritual way
 4. That's why we remember those who came before us, and we honor the living legacy of the work of God in them and through them to this day
- b. A little bit differently in the Epistle, the author speaks directly to the audience and tells them they've been chosen by God for a purpose
 - i. The Thessalonians were waiting for the time when Jesus would return and the dead would be raised, and they had been confused by false teachers who claimed that was happening or had already happened
 - ii. The author writes them to calm their theological fears about the return of Jesus, even while reminding them of the suffering coming under the reign of a lawless leader
 - iii. As God is the God of the living, he reminds them to be firm on their faith and what they had learned, because God had chosen them for this time.
3. When we remember our loved ones, especially those who have died, we acknowledge God had chosen them and us, giving us purpose for our brief time here

- a. Grief is a proper response to our remembering, but so is gratitude
 - b. Consider that we carry on the legacy of service, of love, of working for justice which is part of our congregation's life and beyond.
 - c. God is the God of the living, those who are alive here now and those who are alive to God in the Reign of God, and that is the God who calls and equips us to serve
 - d. We will be those remembered one day, it will be our call to follow Jesus and our work in ministry which will help someone with their journey.
4. For those who have come before us, whether we knew them or not, we give God thanks, as they showed us the way, set the pace and helped us know what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Reflection questions:

1. Share a story about one of the faithful people in your life you remember on this All Saints Day.
2. What is Jesus trying to teach the Sadducees (and the crowd) in Luke 20:27-38?
3. What do you understand Jesus to mean when he says in Luke 20:38 "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to God all of them are alive" ?