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November 3rd, 2019

All Saints Day

What Is the Purpose All Saints Day?

To Praise Christ for what He has done

To be encouraged in our struggle by those who have gone before

To look forward to the day when we will join them

1 John 3:1-3 NKJ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

What's the point of All Saints Day? Why do we even celebrate it?

It's not an accident or a coincidence that All Saints Day is the day after Reformation, and that All Saints Sunday today is the Sunday after Reformation Sunday. The two are back to back on purpose. It was largely because of the Roman Catholic abuse of and false teaching with regard to who the saints were and what all saints day is for that Luther began the reformation. He purposely posted the 95 thesis the day before All Saints day in order to warn the people against the false use of the saints relics. And even though very quickly the reformation moved on past the question of relics and indulgences the question of who and what is a saint was still very much at the heart of what Luther fought for.

But we here we are still celebrating All Saints Day. What are we doing here?

We reject the idea that the purpose of All Saints day is to pray to the saints for help.

There is no word of scripture that implies that the saints can hear us when we pray or that they have the ability to help. Moreover we do have a word from God saying that Jesus does listen and the Holy Spirit gives aid. If we have access to Christ why would we ever pray to the saints?

"If God is for us who can be against us" We don't need any saints when we have Christ.

We also reject the idea that we should ever pray for or attempt to give aid to those who have died.

"It is appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment." Those who are dead need no help. They are either with Christ or they are not. Lighting a candle, making sure to remember them, putting money in a box, even saying prayers accomplishes nothing for them.

So then should we then pray for the saints? Absolutely, our song of the day "For all the saints" is a prayer for the saints. Absolutely we should pray for the dead saints. The question is not should we pray for them, but how should we pray for them.

When we pray for the saints who have passed on to glory there is only one thing we have to say, "Praise to the Lamb who died." San I get an Amen. This is truly something that deserves an Amen.

What is a saint? Our first reading tell us. **"these are they who have come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes in the blood of the lamb."**

They are not saints because of their great deeds. They are not saints because of their great faith. They are saints because our Lord Jesus Christ gave himself as a sacrifice for their and our sins. They are saints **"only by the blood of the lamb."**

What does our text say, **"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!"**

All those who believe in Christ are holy by his blood and are therefore saints, all those who have died in faith stand right now before the throne in holiness and purity. They don't need our prayers for any kind of aid.

But they and the angels and the twenty four elders offer up prayers of praise to the Lamb who was slain because of what He has done for them. And we certainly want to join those songs of prayer of praise.

You know all the prayers that occupy so much of our time now. Prayers for help in trouble, prayers for strength, prayers for comfort, prayers for faith, prayers for healing, etc, all of these prayers will end when we have passed through death into life. We won't need them anymore. But the prayer of praise to the Lamb for all that he has done for all the saints that prayer will go on into eternity.

That is the first part of that great hymn which we will end the service with today: "for all the saints . . . Thy name of Jesus be forever praised" and then again verse two, "thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might, thou their captain in the well fought fight,"

Second we should pray for the living saints so we may be encouraged by the example of all of those who have gone before

So yes we want to pray for the saints offering praise to Christ for their victory, but not all of the saints have won that final victory yet, as our song reminds us "we feebly struggle."

The saints are not only those who have died and gone to heaven, the saints are also all those who live right now, and who have washed their robes in Christ and made them white, in other words the saints are all of us. For us All Saints Day is important as a reminder and an encouragement.

Everyone who has this hope purifies himself -

Because we are the children of God and because we will be so much more, therefore we purify ourselves. You see here is the proper understanding of what a saint is and the place of works.

We reject that saints are those who have done enough good works that they receive salvation or any other special status before God. It is true that from an earthly perspective some do more good works than others. However even those who have done the most have still not done enough.

Romans 3:23 NKJ " for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

If you work hard and get a 65% on your test or if you don't even try and get a 5%, either way you have still failed. None can earn salvation by their works, all have failed.

However we are saved because of the blood of the lamb. The title "children of God" is given to us freely even though we do not deserve it. We are saints because we are washed in his blood. Heaven is ours because He died for us. None of this is anything that we have earned or deserved, but having received it do we not desire to live it?

Works are not what save us nor are they what make us saints. Nevertheless having been made the children of God and knowing what we are to receive how can we not also desire to show this grace of God in our lives.

For this we need God's grace and strength and here also we have the example of those saints who went before. Their example helps us out in temptation and in struggles. Hebrews 11 reminds us of this. We are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses to encourage us when we struggle.

This is the second reason for All Saints Day and the second part of that great hymn *For All The Saints*, when "we feebly struggle" we remember their example and where they are now and we keep going.

Third we wait with eager expectation for the day when we will join them

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is

If we are not paying attention this may seem like a non-sequitor. Why does seeing Him prove that we will be like Him? If I see a horse it doesn't mean I look like a horse. Of course not, but John knows his old testament a little better than we sometimes do.

Moses asked to see the face of God and God responded no one can see my face and live.

Sinners cannot look at the fullness of God's glory. In our sinfulness it would consume us. Nevertheless on that day we will stand face to face with the full glory of God. Therefore John says we will be like Him, that is to say we will be cleansed of our sin, righteous and holy, without spot or blemish. Because of His blood we will be able to stand in the glory of the Lord.

Now we are children of God. We have that promise through his word and through baptism. In His word He promises we are his children, in our baptism he makes that promise personal, you are my child.

This is such a wonderful thing John says "Behold what manner of love." This is the same phrase Mary used when the angel appeared to her. "What manner of greeting is this." She was astonished by the words of the angel and John is astonished by the knowledge that we should be called the children of God.

But even more astonishing is what we will be. Now we have but a small taste of what will be ours. And what will be ours is not something we can even comprehend.

Thinking like a human, it might seem natural, if you get rich, if you marry a prince, if you suddenly find you are the heir to a vast fortune, whatever, something happens your life changes. It might seem natural that you leave your companions behind. If you are bill gates you don't hang out at the pub in Manchester. But here's the thing when Christ rose from the dead and received his full glory and sat down at the right hand of the Father, what did He say to the women? He said, "Go and tell my **brothers**" Having received all power and all authority and all dominion, He still calls us brothers

Now we are children of God, what we will be we can't understand yet, but it's going to be glorious.

This is the third part of "for all the saints"

6. But, lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day;
The saints triumphant rise in bright array; . . .
7. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host, . . .

The countless host, ten thousand times ten thousand, too many to number, all joined before the throne in prayers of praise to the Lamb who was slain. And someday we too will join them. **Amen**