

Sermon for November 3, 2013

Twentieth Fourth Sunday of Pentecost All Saints Sunday,

Gospel Luke 6:17-31

Preaching on Ephesians 1:11-23

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Today I am going to do something which I have **not done** here at Eden before. WATCH OUT!!! As we commemorate All Saints Day today I have decided to preach on our **second** reading for this morning-Ephesians 1:11-23. In his letter to the people of Ephesus the Apostle Paul has written some **beautiful** words about what it means to be **saints** in God's kingdom. It also underscores the inheritance we have in Christ Jesus, how to live in faith now, and how we will be joined with promises of riches in the life to come.

But **first**, a little bit about All Saints Day. One of the primary meanings of All Saints is rather straightforward: It is a day to give thanks to God for the Saints of **all** times and **all** places with whom we are joined in eternal fellowship. It is a time to **remember** our loved ones who have gone before us and who, having died, now live in the **nearer** presence of God. It is also a time to lift up and celebrate the lives of those we love who have died within the last year. We here at Eden

have had many, as a matter of the fact we have 11 beloved saints, who have gone to be with the Lord over the past year.

In our **Lutheran** tradition we do **not** lift up saints in prayer like some other religions do, we do **not** have any statuary to look at surrounding our sanctuary like some other religions do, and we do **not** worship and bow down to saints like some other religions do.

But what **WE DO**—is to remember a phrase our own Martin Luther brought about which is— *Simul Iustus et Peccator* which simply means that we are simultaneously sinners and saints. Now you may be asking yourself how can **that** be? Are they not two **very** different things? Of course they are. This both/and approach is a **distinctly** Lutheran understanding of **who** we are as God's beloved children. In all honesty, I do not think **any** of us here today could consider themselves set apart to be worshipped as a saint or a super holy person. Regular Christians like you and I aren't **bad** people; although, we **do** sin every day. But the truth of Luther's idea of being at the same time sinner and saint is **not** about what we do or do **not** do. It is about our **relationship** with God. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the Garden of Eden their sin was **not so much** them eating a piece of fruit. Their sin was **wanting to be like God**—relying on their **own** will and judgment rather than **trusting** God's word. Our specific sinful behaviors are

only our continued self-centered condition of wanting things our way which is an **ongoing** result of ‘original sin’.

In Paul’s writing to the Ephesians he used lovely faith filled words as he wrote from a prison cell to the people who lived in the capital of the Roman province, a city who’s most prominent civic monument was the **temple** of the goddess Diana which was one of the **7 wonders** of the ancient world. There was much pagan worship in this region and the temple of Diana was a symbol of the **spiritual forces** at work that Paul was writing to combat. Is it much **different** for us today? How many of the people that you know **do not** attend church? As I said the youth and I are going to be talking about the article from the paper yesterday about the agnostic and atheists groups which are popping up on college campuses. How many outside forces do we deal with on a daily or weekly basis that draw our attention from God and what we believe to be right ways of living and being?

Spiritual forces are at work even today.

Paul writes of an **pledged inheritance** we all have obtained through Jesus, Jesus as the one who accomplishes **all** things for us, we live in the **praise** of His glory, He is the **word** of truth, the **gospel** of our salvation which is to be believed in, Paul writes of a baptism where we were **marked** with the seal of the **promised** Holy Spirit, and we are **redeemed** as God’s own people. So many promises from God are fulfilled.

To these troubled and conflicted people Paul wrote his prayer which I believe is a prayer for **us** today as well. He writes he had **heard** of their faith in the Lord, their **love** for all the saints, thanks is given for all **praying** for a spirit of wisdom and revelation, he asked that the **eyes** of the heart be opened with hope and riches of a glorious inheritance among the saints, and he acknowledged gratefulness for the immeasurable greatness of power for we who believe.

Here is where the **power of God** comes in—God put his power to work in **Christ**, He **raised** him from the dead, He **seated** him at His right hand far **above** all rule and authority and power and dominion, above **every** name for all ages. He has put **all** things under his feet, made him the **head** over the church, which is his **body**, the **fullness** of him, who fills **all** in all.

Who in this world could dispute or claim the kind of power that God has? The power to **raise** the saints of this age and the next. The power to be above all. There is **nothing** in this world which could rise above this. *Not now!!! Not ever!!!*

We are simultaneously sinners and saints. To say this is not to say that being a sinner is our identity; it is to say that while we remain sinful in ourselves we are, through **Christ Jesus**, totally right with God. It is **always** about God. It is about what **Jesus** did for us when He **died** on the cross for us, and it is about what **God** does for us through His **grace** that makes us who we are: **saints** in this world who still happen to live in a **deeply sinful** place.

We celebrate All Saints Day today **not** by contrasting the saints over there—those who *have died before us and gone* to be with the Lord before us—or with the would be saints still here in this world. Rather we recognize and celebrate our union with those for whom Jesus died in every time and in every place, a union which has been secured by Jesus' death once and for all, established by our common baptism, and nurtured by our community of faith—the communion of saints. We saints are all called and sent out to be a **blessing** to the world and to be a **witness** to the grace and mercy of God *right here—right now*. Here is to the saint in each of us. All **thanks** be to God. **AMEN**.