

Pastor Jon's November 5, 2023 Sermon based on the Beatitudes in Matthew 5

"All Saints Day"

Greetings to all you saints of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Neenah, WI. How does that sound to you? To be called a saint? Did you know that all the baptized are considered saints in the Lutheran Church? Baptism is the great equalizer.

But keep in mind that Luther said we are simultaneously 100% saint, and 100% sinner. That gives us sinners hope... and that our sainthood is a gift of grace.

We are here today because of all the Christians who have kept the faith in our fallen world and bore witness to you.

So, for my sermon today, I am going to show you a few pictures that came to mind as I prepared this All Saints message:

Show the Picture of my dad. This is Steve Strasman. He died on June 7, 2022.

In this next picture...

Change slide to Al Long's graveside service. Great grands putting dirt on Grandpa's urn.

In this next picture...

Change Slide to show cloud of witnesses art

In our first lesson from Revelation 7, which can be scary to some, we see a vision from John of Patmos of inclusivity... of a of a great multitude of people from every nation, of all tribes, peoples and languages, robed in white, waving palms before the throne of the Lamb. In the Bible, waving palms was used to greet the coming King. Which in Revelation, the Lamb on the throne is Jesus. For us, the white robes and the idea of being washed clean in the blood of the lamb is our baptism and communion. In Revelation, we are told these early Christians will come out of the great ordeal. Which, in the context of Revelation, oppression by the Roman Empire. The future image is all people praising a God who is on a trajectory to stamp out

hunger and thirst, who will guide them to springs of the water of life, and wipe away every tear from their eyes. This is our hope of fulfillment of the coming Kingdom Jesus brought to earth.

What great ordeals are you experiencing or have come through? What ordeals are going on in our world? Certainly, what is happening in Gaza and the Middle East is heartbreaking. May God bring an end to the horrible violence and get help and aid to people who need it. May God bring healing to those closer to home.

This revelation text is meant to give us hope, in apocalyptic language, or symbolic language, to anyone who is experiencing violence or injustice in our world. Salvation belongs to our God and to the lamb. Not any human ruler.

In our Gospel, we have the beloved beatitudes... the beginning of the sermon on the mount.

In the beatitudes, Jesus flips the whole world upside down by who he calls blessed. In Jesus' kingdom, the ones you don't normally call blessed are called blessed.

For example, poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst for justice are blessed in Jesus Kingdom. Blessed can also be translated as, "How honored." So those who are at the end of poor in spirit, or at the end of their rope, or those who are mourning a loss today, or those without power are most to be honored in Jesus' kingdom.

The poor in spirit could speak to those who live in prosperity and rely on themselves... forgetting their dependence on God.

The meek are those who do not have power or weapons like Rome. They are the voiceless in our midst. Jesus promises they shall inherit the earth.

In the beatitudes there is grace for those who Jesus calls blessed and a command to the church on how to live as followers of Jesus. How can we live as Christians while honoring the hurting in our midst and seeking justice for all people?