

So, What Is a Saint?

Date: November 7, 2010

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Luke 6:20-31; Ephesians 1:11-23

Occasion: All Saints Sunday

Theme: Saints, Sanctification

I'm sorry if I disappointed any of you this morning, by not presenting the Gospel in dramatic form, the way we did the last two Sundays. However, I wanted to use *this* text from Ephesians for the sermon this morning. And it doesn't lend itself very well to drama. You see, Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for the church in Ephesus could be my thanksgiving and my prayer for the church at Lakewood. Hear Paul again:

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.” When I heard that I was being appointed to serve the Lakewood church, I rejoiced - because I had heard about your faith and your faithful service to Jesus Christ.

I was so thankful to be appointed to a church that was alive and vibrant. I had heard about your mission trip to Paraguay, your Rock the Park ministry in the neighborhood, your Bible studies, your men's groups and your women's groups and youth ministry. Like Paul I say, “I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

“Paul goes on to say - I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you might know him better.” Paul had heard about their faith, but he was encouraging them to continue in the faith, and not to rest on their laurels. Just accepting Jesus as your Savior does not make you a finished Christian.

I too have heard about our faith, and like Paul I urge us all to go deeper. Perhaps that is a good working definition of a saint. Someone who wants to go deeper in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Not just someone who has had water sprinkled on their head, but someone who is actively seeking to know God better. Hmmm. Might there be saints in the room today? I think so!

Paul goes on in verse 18: “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Now how about that? To those who want to know God better, Paul prays that God would open their eyes. That God would help us to know Him. God is going to give us His power to help us go deeper.

Verse 19 goes on - “That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.” Wow! Did you hear that? The power that God gives to you and me as Christians is resurrection power.

The power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you in me. God’s power is at work in you and me to transform our lives so that we are being conformed more and more into the image of Christ. There was only one Jesus. I can’t be Jesus. You can’t be Jesus. But the more we allow this power of God to work in our lives, the more of Christ’s attributes people begin to see in me, and in you.

Saints are not perfect people. Saints are people who are just like you and me. But by their willingness to allow God’s sanctifying power to work in their lives, they are being changed. And we can see in them something of the holy. It’s God’s

business to make saints. It's not our job to make ourselves into saints.

Take that pressure off of yourselves. We are saved by grace, we are sanctified by grace. We are made holy by grace. It is God's doing. Remember, Paul prayed that God would give to the Christians of Ephesus that power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead, so that they could know Him better. It's God's work in us.

But you and I have to cooperate with God's spirit. We have to be willing to allow the Spirit's work in our lives. And we never grow to be so old that we can't allow God to use us, to work in us, to change us.

Professor John Killinger in his book "Letting God Bless You" relates the story of a beautiful woman who is 90 years old and has always been extremely generous with everything she has.

He says, "She helps foreign students who want to come to this country to study. She sends flowers and food to people who have had a distressing time of any kind. She gives frequent dinners and parties in order to be able to introduce people to one another. Often she sends theater and concert tickets to people she knows would appreciate them, but can't afford them. She is always doing something nice for somebody, or giving somebody something he or she needs. Everyone loves her because of her selflessness and generosity."

"I said to her one day, "You are so good to everybody." "Oh no," she said. "It is God who has been good to me. He has given me so much more than I can ever use. The more I give away, the more I have. It is wonderful."

So, what is a saint? Is it someone who does miracles and is the most super nice person in the world? No, hardly. Saints love God and want more of God in

their lives. As God become more a part of their life, they begin to change and take on godly qualities. But they don't see it. They're too busy looking for more God in their lives.

Saints are humble people. They don't see in themselves what other people see in them. And what is it that people see? I believe it is this extraordinary power of God, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, that is at work in people's lives. Opening our eyes to see the riches of his glorious inheritance of the saints.

I've seen it in many of you. And so I give God thanks for your faith. And I pray that you will continue to go deeper. Continue to seek God's presence and power and love and grace. Not for the gifts that He will give you, simply seek God. And remember, God gives us an extraordinary power to seek Him.

I pray that you may be hungry for God, all you saints of God. Amen.