

ALL SAINTS DAY  
Revelation 7.  
Hymns:147, 149, 217, 323, 285, 644.

**Introit: Psalm 149.**

**P** Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song,  
**C** **His praise in the assembly of devout people!**  
**P** Let Israel rejoice in its Maker!  
**C** **Let the children of Zion be joyful over their King!**  
**P** Let them praise His name with dancing!  
**C** **Let them make music to Him with tambourine and lyre!**  
**P** For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.  
**C** **He glorifies humble people with salvation.**  
**P** Let devout people be jubilant in glory!  
**C** **Let them shout for joy on their beds!**  
**P** Let the high praises of God be in their throats, and double-edged swords in their hands,  
**C** **to carry out vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples,**  
**P** to tie up their kings with chains, and their nobles' feet with iron shackles,  
**All:** **to carry out the judgment that has been written against them! This is an honour that belongs to all His devout people. Praise the LORD!**

**COLLECT:** Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

**Readings.**

**1st Reading: Revelation 7:2-17**

**Epistle: 1 John 3:1-3**

**Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon for this Sunday is written in the book of Revelation which was our 1st reading.

**2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east with the seal of the living God. He called out with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to damage the land and the sea, 3 saying: "Do not damage the land or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads!"**

**4 Then I heard the number of those who had been sealed: "one hundred and forty-four thousand." These were those who had been sealed were from every tribe of the people of Israel. 5 From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand had been sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, and from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand had been sealed. 9 After this, I looked, and saw a large crowd that no one could count, from every nation and all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes, and carrying palm-branches in their hands. 10 They called out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"**

**11 All the angels were standing around the throne, around the elders, and around the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and strength be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."**

**13 Then one of the elders asked me: "Who are these people who have been clothed in the white robes, and where have they come from?"**

**14 I replied to him, "My master, you know."**

**He told me: "These are the people who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore they are before the throne of God and keep serving Him day and night in His temple, and He who is sitting on the throne will shelter them with His tent. 16 They will not be hungry any more or thirsty any more. The sun will certainly not beat on them, or any scorching heat, 17 because the Lamb, who is in the middle of the throne, will be their Shepherd, and He will lead them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes."**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us by Your truth. Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ:

Peace be with you.

Today we celebrate the feast of All Saints. So who are the saints?

In a sense, this theme continues our celebration last Sunday when we remembered the Reformation in the sixteenth century. This Reformation began when the monk, priest and professor of theology, Dr. Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, against the errors of the church hierarchy in Rome. The date was October 31, 1517, when the truths of the Scriptures were reaffirmed: justification by faith alone; salvation by grace alone; and the sole authority of Scripture.

Not by chance did Luther decide to nail his theses to the church door on October 31. He didn't rise that morning and think, - What a beautiful day! - I think I'll go for a walk to church to nail my theses on the door. At that time, the celebration of the Feast of All Saints began on the eve of October 31 and continued until November 2.

Let me talk about the history of All Saints Day. It originated in the fourth century after Christ. There was much persecution of Christians in the first three hundred years after Christ, - and many Christians died for their faith at the hands of unbelievers. They sacrificed their lives as witnesses to the truth of the gospel of Christ as Lord and Saviour. The Roman empire said, Caesar is Lord, ie, a god to the masses. But the church said no, "Christ is our Lord."

Everything changed rapidly in the Fourth Century, by the end of that century, Christianity was the religion of the empire. So, the church wanted to honour the martyrs of the first three hundred years, but they were too many martyrs to dedicate one day on the church calendar for each. Therefore, they dedicated a day to honour all the martyrs. The idea emerged in the part of the world we know today as Turkey and Syria and was disseminated throughout the Christian world.

In the beginning, the date of the Day of All Saints was the first Sunday after Pentecost and today the Greek Orthodox churches in eastern Europe and Asia celebrate it on this date. In the seventh century AD., Pope Boniface IV changed the date to November 1 for the Western Church. Because the Pope wanted a special occasion for the dedication of a temple in Rome. Venezuelan culture reflects this change because the first two days of November are the dates to decorate the tombs of the dear departed.

But like the churches in the East, our Lutheran church does not recognize the primacy of the pope. So, why do we celebrate All Saints Day on November 1? Firstly, because this is the date recognized in many parts of the Christian world. Secondly, and more important, October 31 is the date of Reformation Day for us. If Reformation Day is observed on Sunday, it should be the Sunday before October 31 in order to be allow for a similar celebration of All Saints the Sunday on or after November 1.

Luther decided to publish his thesis during the Feast of All Saints because the theses deal with the fate of human souls. So let's start with number 35:

***They preach no Christian doctrine who teach that contrition is not necessary in those who intend to buy souls out of purgatory or to buy confessionalia. Every truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, - even without letters of pardon. Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has part in all the blessings of Christ and the Church; - and this is granted him by God, even without letters of pardon.***

The Church of Rome at that time and still today says, - well, Christ died for your sins and erased the guilt of original sin and actual sins past. But now, when you fall into sin, you must do penance or make restitution. If you cannot do penance in this life, you must stay in purgatory, a state between earthly life and eternal life in the presence of Christ, until you have done so. However, the pope has the authority to write a letter of forgiveness to cut your time in purgatory as a reward for a financial donation to the church.

So where's the gospel, then? The Bible teaches justification by faith in Christ. He has made restitution for all our sins in the past and the future. Because of Christ we have the right to full remission and to enter immediately into God's presence after physical death. The blood of Christ covers all our sins.

Luther also rejected the teaching of the Roman church about the saints. According to the Roman church saints are those who, by their own merits have come out of purgatory and into the presence of God. We only know who is in the presence of God when someone prays to a person and a miracle happens, and the church declared the miracle valid and the person a saint. In this way Rome has declared John Paul II a saint.

Among us Lutherans we speak of the heroes of faith as saints, for example, St. Matthew, St. Paul, St. Luke or St. John. They are holy. We recognize them as models for us. We also speak of those who died in the faith as saints and honour them on this day. As our text for today says, the saints in heaven are they which came out of the great tribulation. So what's the great tribulation? It's the life in this world, because in this life are sufferings, trials and difficulties. The saints in heaven have passed beyond all these things. As St John says, now they do not hunger or thirst, or feel heat or pain. They live forever with Christ as the reward for their faith. They are at rest and peace with Christ.

Therefore, we honour them, but we don't pray to or worship them. We have one Mediator between God and us in Christ and don't need anyone else.

The Bible teaches us that all who believe in Jesus Christ are saints. What do we confess in the Apostles' Creed? We believe in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints don't we. The holy Christian church is the same as the communion of saints. The church is all who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, - and in sincere faith receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. They are the saints of God. The difference between the saints in heaven and us is they are at rest, and we are in the fight against the world, sin and the devil.

St. John speaks in Revelation about persecution. Those wearing white robes are they which came out of the great tribulation. Also in our gospel for today. The Lord speaks of persecution. This is part of the Sermon on the Mount, called the Beatitudes. [Matthew 5:1-12.]

**“Blessed are those who have been persecuted because of righteousness! For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you, because of Me! 12 Rejoice and be very glad! For your reward in heaven is great. For in this way people persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

The beatitudes are not another table of the law. They speak of the destiny of the faithful. They don't say you must be peacemakers to become children of God. On the contrary, because we are children of God by the blood of Christ, we will be peacemakers. Because we show the love of God in our lives, not by our own strength, but by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. And above all, our destiny is to receive the joy of the Lord's presence in heaven.

So why persecution? In the world around us are unbelievers who do not want to hear the gospel. They want to believe in their own righteousness, and don't want a Saviour. Also in this world we fight against the devil, the spirit of evil and the enemy of God. He wants to denounce us as hypocrites and failures.

And we fight against our sinful nature as well, and that won't die until we physically die! In baptism we receive new spiritual life, - so we are saints. But because of the old Adam, - we are sinners too. But on the day of our resurrection, - the work of sanctification will be complete.

In the struggle it's our goal with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live as did the witnesses of Christ in heaven, to remain in the faith until the end. We hope to meet with the saints around the throne with angels, our friends, our family and other heavenly beings in the worship of which our meetings around the Lord's table are weak reflections. Amen.

The peace that passes all understanding be with each of you forever. **Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 217,**

### **Prayer of the Church All Saints' Day 2017**

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief silence*

P For the poor in spirit, who gather this day to receive the grace and mercy by which we are made rich in Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who mourn, that they may receive abundant comfort in the promises of Jesus Christ, who makes all things new, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the meek, including all who patiently and lovingly speak the Gospel to others, that the Holy Spirit may work through the Word they speak to create faith in many who will inherit the new creation in Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, that in faithfulness they may approach the altar, trusting the words of Christ, to receive His body and blood for the sustenance of their bodies and souls, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the merciful, including the pastors and Sunday school teachers who speak of God's mercy to His people, that they may remain steadfast in the Word and live in the mercy they proclaim, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the peacemakers, including all in authority, that they may be blessed in working toward peace, especially that the peace of God in Christ may continue to be proclaimed freely, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, that they may be upheld and strengthened in the one true faith even in the face of suffering, and that all God's people may boldly confess the name of Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For the sick and the recovering, [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_,] that they may be granted health and healing according to God's wisdom, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For all the saints who rest from their labours, [*including* \_\_\_\_\_,] that we may remember them with thanksgiving and joy, even as we look forward to seeing them again at the throne of the Lamb, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For thankful hearts, for the grace to use all that God has given to us to His glory and according to His gracious will, for allowing us to participate in the sharing of that grace in the Body and precious Blood of Your Son at Your altar today, and for the sacrifices of thanksgiving we bring in praise of the goodness of You our Lord, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

P For all this and for whatsoever else You know that we need, we ask of Your great mercy, O Lord. Salvation belongs to You who sits on the throne and to the Lamb! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn: 323**