

Revelation 7: 9-17; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

I'd like to invite the young folk forward, if their willing. One brave man, thank you sir. How are you guys tonight? I've got a bunch of stuff up here tonight that we don't normally have on a Saturday, so I thought I would talk a little bit about it. (*Pastor Brock is standing by a tall candle on a large, brass candle stand, which is by a small wooden table with a bowl on a wooden stand and pitcher*) What do you guys see, what am I standing right by? What does it look like? Okay, go ahead. Something for communion, that would be a really good guess. It's not right, but it would be a really good guess. It's not communion. Tell you what - here, let me do this; what does this look like, what is this? Well, yes, it's a pitcher, and what is inside? It's water, okay. So we've got a pitcher full of water; (*turning the bowl upside down on his head*) we've got a handy dandy cap, right? No, no what is this? A bowl, a bowl, yes. And we've got a stand to put the bowl on. Now I am guessing that maybe when you guys were little babies, as I was when this happened to me, I was baptized when I was a little baby. (*One of the children speaks up*) You're a big sister? That's fantastic, wow! I am bigger than my sister, but I'm still younger than her. So I call her my older sister, not my big sister, but it is fun to be a big sister. But probably when you guys were little you were baptized. I was nine months old when I was baptized. I was probably about yea long when I was baptized.

And so tonight, one of the things we are going to do, in a little bit I am going to pour the water into the bowl while I say a prayer. And we're going to do that to help us remember that we are baptized. Now, why would we want to do that? That's a tricky question that I bet even mom or dad might not be able to answer. Anybody out there come up with any ideas why might we want to remember our baptism tonight? (*One of the adults responds "We're children of God"*) We're children of God, that's right. We are children of God regardless if we are still alive on this earth or if we have died. And, so tonight, as we say this I will pour water in here to help us remember that we are all still children of God. Then, when we come up for communion, as you come forward, if you want, now you don't have to, but if you want, you can dip your fingers into the water and make the sign of the cross on you. (*Pastor Brock makes the sign of the cross, touching first his forehead, then chest, left shoulder, right shoulder, then breast*) The sign that the pastor made on you, you can either do it like I just did or you can just do a little short one on your forehead. When I'm fortunate enough to be able to preside when someone is baptized, I pour water over their head and then I make the sign of the cross on their forehead. And it helps me remember that we are all children of God. So that's what this special stuff is about.

Now, I've got one other unusual thing for this service here: this really big candle. This candle is almost six-foot tall, and it's got a fancy name to it. It's called the Pascal Candle. And it is called that because it helps us to remember several things. First of all, we say that Jesus is the light of the world, and we light it on very special occasions. We light it when somebody is baptized, we light it during the whole time that we celebrate Easter, and we also light it at a funeral service. And tonight, since we are remembering all of the people that have passed away this last year, we have it lit as well. Because it helps us to remember, like the waters help us to remember we are children of God, the light helps us to remember that we are all united together in Jesus. So those are a couple of things that we usually don't have at this service. Thanks for coming up, you all were very brave.

Grace to you and peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen

I am feeling very formal tonight, and I feel like I have to explain. The reason I'm wearing all black - shirt, pants, and jacket - or I tend to call it, full dress uniform, is because I had a grave side service today. I thought that it was rather appropriate that today, of all days, as we are celebrating All Saints, that I should be able to preside at this service of this wonderful woman, this woman who probably most of us don't know. Anna Arnold, a member here at Trinity for fifty years, but due to health reasons has not been active in the last ten years or so. Ninety-seven years of age when she passed away. She met her husband when she was fourteen. They dated for thirteen years, were married for forty-nine years before he joined the Church Eternal. A wonderful, warm, and gracious woman. And as I stood there with a small group of people, mainly Anna's family, and we remembered her, I was struck once again of how appropriate that it is this day that Barbara and Linda, her daughters, and their families gathered together to remember her.

And we do so tonight as we gather together, in part to remember the thirty-five members and friends of our congregation who joined the Church Eternal last year. We see the lights burning for them: the small candles, reminding us, as I just spoke with the kids, that we are all united together in Christ.

We call it All Saints because that's what we are. We are indeed saints. Now, maybe we might have a little bit of a struggle with that word. It's a wonderful, wonderful, Greek word, *hagiois*. It almost sounds like something you might want to eat or maybe might not want to eat. But it really means, at the root of that word, is the Greek word for holy. And in the form as it was translated in our text from Revelation tonight, a literal translation would be *the holy ones*. Those of us who have received the waters of baptism. Those of us who have had the sign of the cross marked on us, "sealed with the sign of the cross forever." Those are the words that I say at a baptism as I make the sign of the cross on the forehead. Sealed by the sign of the cross, marked with Christ. They're words that help us to remember that as we gathered together at those times of funerals, we're gathering there not to say good-bye to someone, because the promises of our baptism tells us that we will be rejoined. We will see them again as we are all joined together with our Lord. As again the words in Revelation reminded us. Until then, until then we have those words from Matthew to remind us how to live. To live in graciousness and caring for one another. Regardless of how we are treated, we who the bear the sign of this cross on us - regardless that it can't be seen by anyone with human eyes - those of us who bear the mark of Christ are called to treat one another with love, grace, and respect, especially a fellow believer. It is not an easy thing to do, and we fail, and again the words of Matthew remind us that we will fail. Yet, in that failing, we will also be forgiven. We will be forgiven and rejoined with those who have gone before us. A great and wonderful promise to remember for those of us who have suffered that loss. The loss of a loved one, the loss of someone dear and close to us. That we shall indeed be joined together again.

And in that let us take hope, let us rejoice as we go out, not only into the darkness of the night, but the darkness that is the world, the darkness that tries to drag us down, fill us with overwhelming grief and not be able to see the light. Let us go into that darkness with the light of Christ. With the knowledge and understanding that we have not said good-bye, but rather that we will be joined together again. Let us live in that hope, the hope of that promise in Christ's name.

Amen.