



## “Living with Gratitude – Thankful Hope”

### All Saints Sunday

Saturday & Sunday, November 2–3, 2019

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Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Luke 6:20-31, Ephesians 1:11-19

Today we remember the saints who now rest from their labors. Today we remember the saints who touched our lives. Today we remember the saints who left us too soon. Today we remember the saints who loved us as much as we loved them. Today we remember all saints: those we knew and those we did not. As we remember saints today, we have thankful hope. We are thankful for these saints and we live in hope of the resurrection, we live in hope that we will be reunited with them and with God.

Both readings for today speak to this hope. In Luke, Jesus speaking to his disciples says, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” I imagine the disciples that heard those words thought: “What a strange thing for Jesus to say?” And I imagine we who have heard these words so many times don’t stop to ponder how strange it is to say “Blessed are you who weep...” Because in the modern sense of the word *blessed*, we might think to be blessed is to be happy. In this age of social media, we see #blessed as people use it for life’s everyday occurrences of good fortune, luck, and happiness. But, what did Jesus mean when he said the word *blessed*. Surely, he didn’t mean happy are those who are sad. That doesn’t make much sense.

When Jesus says those who weep are blessed, he doesn’t mean they are lucky or happy. Think about the blessing that we often say at the end of our worship services: “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.” We hear this blessing or something similar every week to remind us that God is always with us. That’s what it means to be blessed.

Those who weep are blessed because God loves them, because God weeps with them. God weeps with us. Think of the story of Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus arrives in Bethany to find his friend, Lazarus dead. His sisters Martha and Mary weep for their brother. Mary goes so far as to tell Jesus her brother wouldn’t be dead if he’d come to see them sooner. The author of John tells us Jesus was “disturbed in spirit and deeply moved,” and he begins to weep. Jesus weeps even though he knows what is about to happen to his friend, Lazarus. Jesus weeps even though he knows the promise of the resurrection. Jesus weeps even though he is God, God who can and does bring the dead back to life. This story tells us that God weeps with us. This story tells us that we are not alone; God is with us in these moments of grief and despair. And that makes us who weep blessed. This is our hope!

Our thankful hope also lies in the inheritance the author of Ephesians describes. An inheritance is something that has been passed down to us, something like a possession or a gift, a trait or a tradition.

There is a Jewish practice in which the dead are remembered by the living much like we are doing today with All Saints. Four times a year Jews observe a memorial service called *yizkor* based on the Jewish belief that “we live on in the memory of those who survive us.” For Jews, remembrance is very important and remembering the dead is of utmost importance.

Rabbinical student PJ Schwartz puts it beautifully: “To remember... is not only about bringing loved ones to mind, but [it] calls us to do things to honor their memory and the impact they have had upon us. To remember is to lift up all those things the deceased have taught us so that their lives continue through our own hearts.”

Here is where inheritance comes into play. If you think about it, you have probably received an inheritance from the saints you remember today. We remember saints in our lives when we “do things to honor their memory and the impact they have had upon us.” It is then that these special people live on in us and through us. When we remember saints in this way, we live in thankful hope: thankful for them and the things they have passed on to us, and in hope because their memories live on within us.

I think of my grandfather whose memory lives on in my brother. My grandfather was a musician, a drummer that traveled the country sharing his gift and love of music with lots of people. In fact, he once played a show with Carlos Santana. When my grandfather died in 1997, he gifted his drum set to my brother, who still plays the drums today.

I think of my friend, Emily, who is the reason I am a vegetarian. When Emily died in 2009, I decided that to keep her memory alive, I would become a vegetarian, something that was very important to her.

I am both thankful and filled with hope because I know these two special people are alive in my heart. So, think about this, friends: What has been passed down to you? How might you remember the saints in your life? How might their memories live on in your heart?

We also live in thankful hope because we have received the “glorious inheritance,” the inheritance of being God’s beloved children and so have the saints we remember today! This is the inheritance that tells us that death has no power. This is the inheritance that proclaims Jesus’ victory over death! This is the inheritance of the resurrection! This is the inheritance that we receive - all of us - no matter who we are. This is our hope!

So, thanks be to God. For you are blessed! Thanks be to God! For you have this glorious inheritance! Amen!

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