

Sermon for the Sunday of All Saints

1st Sunday After Pentecost

Hebrews 11:33-12.2

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June 30, 2024

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.

Think about the ways that you can know something. . . there are many ways that know something.

We can, observe things. You know, we pick up a ball, and we drop the ball, and the ball falls to the ground, and the same things happens over and over again.

So we use our, our observation skills, our senses, to learn things.

We can also learn and understand things through our reason. Right?

We can think through something, we can think, Okay, I have two of one thing, and I have two more of that thing, and that means I have four of that thing.

So we use our reason to understand, to know things. We can also know things through someone else telling us. Right? We know a good friend. They tell us, you know, this amazing thing happened. So we can learn and understand things from our friends.

The last way we can learn and understand things is through our own experience.

We can have our own experience of something and come to know that as a true and real thing.

So there are many ways that we can come to know something.

The Scripture describes someone who refuses to learn as a fool. Right?

And this is one of the worst things you can say about someone in the scriptures. . . You call them a fool.

And I think that would still apply even today. If you went out to some random person on the street and you said, you are a fool, you might get in a fight. Right? Because that is an insult to someone—to call them a fool.

And so, if we are not learning, with our observation, with our experience, with listening to other people who have experiences then, it follows that we are fools in some way.

And we all have to pray that the Lord would help us to flee from this sin of stubbornness. . . of willful ignorance because that is something that sometimes we find ourselves doing.

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. . . that is actually the definition of insanity.

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. . . You're banging your head against the wall and saying why does my head hurt? That's insanity.

And so we have to flee this sin of stubbornness and willful ignorance.

Today, we remember the apostles. We celebrate both the twelve apostles specifically, but also all saints of the Church.

We heard in the epistle, all of the saints who have gone before us, who have been made perfect, and they are like a great cloud of witnesses that stand around us.

When we're here in this church, we are surrounded by the saints who are worshiping God in the heavenly liturgy. And these great and glorified Saints share their experiences with us.

We have such a treasure in the Church where we, we have the lives of millions and millions of people who have gone before us, who have lead holy lives, and they want to share their experience with us.

They want to, they want to help us to have that same experience.

So like I said, one of the ways we can learn about things, the nature of things, how things are, is to hear from other people to hear from our friends, right?

Well, the Saints are our friends in the Church.

They're the ones who are praying for us.

Sometimes people have difficulty with idea that we pray to people who are dead. . .

Well, first of all, they're not dead. They're living with God. And second of all, if I go and ask one of you to pray for me, that's a natural thing to do. And you would pray for me, and I would pray for you. That's what friends do for each other. We pray for each other, we ask God, we ask God's mercy upon our friends and our brothers and sisters.

So this is what the saints are doing for us. They are a great cloud of witnesses.

And what are they witnessing to? They are witnessing to the personal experience of the Resurrected Christ and the truth of that revelation. Right? This is what they are witnessing to for us and they're waiting to tell us.

You know, sometimes it's a painful thing when you give advice to someone and you have the same experience with them or a very similar experience to them and you want to give advice, you want to help them, but they don't listen. They don't follow the advice. And it hurts. It's painful.

To see someone else suffering or going through something difficult. And it's like, "listen, I can help you. I can help you through this."

As a parent, you've experienced these things. Right? "Just come this way. It won't be so difficult for you."

This is what the saints are doing for us... The Saints are doing this for us...

And we don't want to be someone who is stubborn and foolish, not listening to those who have gone before us, to their experiences... to their experience of salvation, which, as I've said over and over again, our salvation is union with God.

There is nothing greater in the world. Nothing greater in the world than having union with our Creator and Maker, who made us. And the Saints have this experience.

And we have a foretaste of this experience now, when we're here in Church and we're seeking to live the life that the Church asks us to live.

So what can we do to listen to the saints?

Well, first of all, we need to learn about them. How can we learn about the saints? We read. We read about their lives. There are all kinds of resources we can use. All kinds of books we

can buy. Just google “lives of the saints” and a whole bunch of things will come up. There’s apps that you can get on your phone too.

A short paragraph a day. Sometimes a little longer. You just read about the lives of the saints.

On our own website, St. George, you click on the saint of the day and a big, long paragraph about the saints that we remember for that day.

So first we read about them and we learn what were their lives like. What were they doing? And then we imitate them. Not in the details of their lives though. . . If there’s a saint who goes out in the wilderness and fasts for 40 years, and they eat only, you know, herbs or something, that’s not what we’re being asked to do or imitate.

But we are being asked to fast and to pray a little bit—dont eat animal products on Wednesday and Friday. . .

Maybe there is a Saint who we learn about who prays all night long, standing, with their arms raised. Okay, that’s not what I’m asked to do, but I am asked to pray. I wake up in the middle of the night, I say the our Father and I go back to bed.

These are the are things we can do to imitate the saints.

Again, not in the strict, fine details of their lives, but the way that they are living their life. A life of prayer, a life of fasting, a life of alms giving.

And so, we learn from others and this is what a wise person does.

We behave as someone who is wise and then what happens? . . .

Well, then, that becomes our own experience. And now we have a deeper and more true and real experience of what it is to have salvation, to have the union with God.

So we learn from others and we make it our own and salvation becomes the experience of our lives. Lord help us to have an union with You through learning from Your holy ones Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. One God—Amen.