

All Saints Day
03-11-2024
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 25:6-	Gods Salvation is coming, with gladness and rejoicing
Psalms 24	The Lord has created the Earth, Seek God for Salvation
Revelation 21:1-6a	A new heaven and a new earth, is coming
John 11:32-44	Jesus raises Lazarus from the Dead

Introduction

Today is All Saint's Day and I would like us to look at :-

- Who is a Saint?
- Why do we have a day to remember All Saints?
- What might it mean for us to be Saint's today?

Who is a Saint?

Firstly, what do we think of when we hear the word saint? Maybe people depicted in stained glass windows. Maybe St Cuthbert, who our church here in Tweed Heads is named in memory of, because he lived near the Tweed River in England. Maybe one of the Twelve Apostles, who were the first followers of Jesus. In the Roman Catholic Church tradition, they have a process for deciding who can be officially named a Saint within the Church. But in its simplest definition, a saint is just someone who has decided to repent and follow Jesus in their lives. In Paul's letters to the Romans and the Ephesians we hear the word Saints used synonymously with those who are Christians.

So, to be a Saint is to be a Christian, and the Christian rite of initiation is Baptism. So, let us look at what we profess at our Baptism. Following are the questions and responses outlined in the part of the Baptism Service entitled "The Decision" :-

Before God and this congregation, you must affirm that you turn to Christ and reject all that is evil:

Do you turn to Christ?

I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?

I repent of my sins.

Do you reject all selfish living, and all that is false and unjust?

I reject them all.

Do you renounce Satan and all evil?

I renounce all that is evil.

Almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, and lead you in the light of Christ to his everlasting kingdom.

Amen.

The priest says to the candidates and sponsors

Will you each, by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart, and your neighbours as yourself, until your life's end?

I will, with God's help.

The priest says to the congregation

You have heard *these our brothers and sisters* respond to Christ. Will you support *them* in this calling?

The congregation answers

We will.

So, a Saint is someone who has chosen to accept Jesus, and to live as a follower of Jesus. We see in the Baptismal promises that whilst deciding to follow Jesus is very personal, it is not private. The congregation is involved with the promises that are made.

We hear these words from our readings today that remind us that being a Saint is to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves.

Today's Sentence of Scripture from the Book of Revelation we hear :-

And a great multitude, from every nation and tribe and people and language, cried with a loud voice, saying "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.

And from chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation we hear :-

'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'

Saints by definition, are those who follow Jesus, and Saints by definition gather together to support one another.

Saints are people who have hope.

Why do we have a day to remember All Saints?

So why has the Church set aside a day to remember all Saints?

This is what my book of Saints says:-

"From its earliest days, the Church has recognized as its foundation stones those heroes of the faith whose lives have excited others to holiness and has assumed a communion between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven."

It goes on to describe how All Saints Day began to be observed by the Church, quite early in the life of the Church, in the 4th Century. It was initially observed straight after the feast of Pentecost. It made sense to have the two together, as Pentecost was the

coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church, and All Saints remembered those who founded and continued the Church. In the 8th century a pope decided to dedicate a chapel to All Saints on the 1st of November, and after a little while, this also became the date it was observed in Britain.

We remember the Saints, because it is the Saints, who have passed on the faith, to us.

What does it mean for us to be Saints Today?

And so, what might it mean for us to be saints today?

As Christians we are people who live with the hope of the resurrection. This does not mean that this life is not important, and we are only waiting for what comes next. Rather it means that we are secure in our future, no matter the challenges we face in this life.

As Australians, by world standards we have remarkably wonderful lives. I looked at some recent statistics, and as a country we have the third highest life expectancy in the world, and we are in the top 10% of countries for per capita GDP. So, in purely worldly terms, we in Australia, have very good lives. Yet, in our secular society there seems at one level a clear lack of hope.

We will, of course, all face challenges in life. We will all face sickness. It will be rare if we are not hurt by others. We will face the loss of loved ones. And at some stage, unless Jesus returns first, we will all face death. And so, to be a Saint, is to have the comfort of knowing God, in the challenges we face in this life, and that afterwards we will remain with God.

And the Hope of the Resurrection, gives us freedom to do the things that God has called us to do. As Saints we are called to live in accordance with God's ways. This entails first loving God, and then loving our neighbours as ourselves.

And I believe the best way to love others is to pass on this life affirming faith, to those who come after us.

Conclusion

Christianity is not a faith that exists in a vacuum. It begins with a relationship with God through Jesus, and it is nurtured and encouraged by the relationships we have with other Christians.

We remember All Saints Day because we are strengthened in our faith by those who shared their faith, in their lives, with us.

How is your relationship with Jesus, and how are your relationships with our church family?

I pray that it will be said of us,

“They helped me to know and follow Jesus in my life?” Amen.