

NOVEMBER 1 – ALL SAINTS SUNDAY: *LOOK WHO'S HERE*

Revelation 7:9-17

All Saints Sunday is one of those special days in the life of the church when we remember and give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith. It's a day that can bring a mixture of emotions. We remember people who made us laugh, Encouraged us, taught us something about life and faith, and helped shape who we are today. Some memories bring smiles, while others remind us just how much we miss those who are no longer with us.

Our message this Sunday is ***Look Who's Here,*** based on Revelation 7:9-17 (CEB). In this passage, John shares an extraordinary vision of a great multitude gathered before the throne of God. These are people who have known hardship and suffering, yet John's vision is filled with worship, hope, and the promise of God's care. It's a passage that invites us to think about some of the questions we carry, especially when we experience loss. What does our faith teach us about death? What does it mean to believe in the communion of saints? And how do we hold on to hope while still acknowledging the grief we feel?

Reflect and Prepare

1. Who are some of the people whose faith and example have made a difference in your life?
2. What memories of loved ones who have died still make you smile?
3. What stands out to you about John's vision in Revelation 7?
4. Why do you think this vision would have been meaningful to people experiencing suffering?
5. What does the communion of saints mean to you?
6. How has your faith helped you through a season of grief or loss?
7. What do you find most comforting about the promises of God in this passage?

As part of our worship, we will read the names of members of our church family who have died during the past year and gather for Holy Communion. I know some of us will come with hearts that are still grieving, while others will be remembering loved ones whose absence has been felt for many years.

Wherever we find ourselves, my prayer is that this time of worship will give us space to remember with gratitude, find comfort in God's promises, and be reminded of the hope we share in Jesus the Christ.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the saints who have gone before us and the love they have shared. Comfort us in our grief, strengthen us in our faith, and remind us that death never has the final word. Help us to live with hope until that glorious day when every tear is wiped away and we are gathered together in your presence. Amen.

NOVEMBER 8: *REMEMBERING YOUR TESTIMONY* **Ezekiel 37:1–14 • 1 John 5:6–12**

Opening Reflection

Memory shapes identity. When we forget what God has done, our faith can grow brittle, and the present moment can feel like the whole story. Seasons of loss, disappointment, or exhaustion can leave us feeling like a valley of dry bones, scattered and without breath. In those seasons, remembering is not nostalgia; it is an act of faith that reminds us who God has been and who God still is.

Ezekiel stands among the bones of a defeated people and hears God ask whether they can live. What strength it must have taken for Ezekiel to prophesy while standing in a grave. And yet, God brings life back to a dead place and a dead people through the telling of story. Transformation through testimony.

1 John reminds us that God has already testified about the Son, and that believers carry that testimony within them. Our testimony is not a polished performance; it is the honest story of God's life-giving work, offered so that others might find hope.

Discuss or Reflect

1. Where in your life have you experienced something like a "valley of dry bones"?
2. Why do you think God asks Ezekiel whether the bones can live, rather than simply restoring them?
3. What role does God's breath, or Spirit, play in bringing new life in this passage and in our lives today?
4. According to 1 John, what does it mean to carry God's testimony within us?
5. Why might remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen our trust in the present?
6. What makes sharing our faith stories feel risky, awkward, or unnecessary?
7. Who first told you their story of God's faithfulness, and how did it shape you?

Formation Invitation

Set aside fifteen minutes this week to write down three moments when you sensed God's presence, provision, or rescue. Don't worry about making them impressive. Then choose one person, a friend, family member, or member of your small group, and share one of those moments with them.

Writing Your Faith Story, Part 1: Gathering the Memories

Over the next three weeks, you're invited to write your own faith story. This week, begin by gathering the raw material. Draw a simple timeline of your life, marking the years or seasons from childhood to today. Along it, note:

- People who shaped your faith (a parent, grandparent, teacher, pastor, or friend)
- Places that mattered (a church, a camp, a hospital room, a kitchen table)
- Moments when God felt especially near, and moments when God felt far away

Don't write in full sentences yet. Simply collect. You'll return to this timeline next week.

For Further Reflection

Read Psalm 77 and Psalm 126. Notice how the psalmists move from distress to remembrance, and from remembrance to renewed hope.

Closing Prayer

Living God, breathe on the dry places in our lives. When we forget, help us remember. When we feel scattered, gather us. Give us courage to tell the truth about what you have done, so that our stories might become a source of hope for others. Fill us again with your Spirit. Amen.

NOVEMBER 15: *STILL BECOMING* **Philippians 3:12-14**

Opening Reflection

Our culture often prizes arrival: the finished project, the polished image, the life that looks complete. Many of us quietly carry the pressure to have it all together, including in our faith. But that pressure can make us defensive about our shortcomings or discouraged that we haven't grown faster. The burden to have the perfect life further isolates us from one another and makes us feel like we're the only ones who are working to hold it all together.

Paul doesn't pretend to have a perfect life or to have achieved the prize. He describes himself as still reaching, still pursuing, still pressing on, precisely because Christ has already taken hold of him. Growth in faith cannot be driven by anxiety but must be grounded in grace. Letting go of what lies behind, both our failures and our past achievements, frees us to receive what God is doing now.

Discuss or Reflect

1. Why do you think Paul is so candid about not having reached the goal?
2. What does it mean that Christ has "taken hold" of us before we ever reach for him?
3. What kinds of things, whether regrets, wounds, or past successes, can keep us from moving forward?
4. How is pressing on in faith different from striving to earn God's approval?
5. What is the "goal" Paul is pursuing, and how might you describe that goal in your own life?
6. How can a church community make room for people who are still growing, including ourselves? What struggles can come from welcoming all people?
7. Where do you sense God inviting you to take the next step of growth right now?

Formation Invitation

Each evening this week, take a few minutes to ask two questions: Where did I notice God at work in me today? What do I need to release to God tonight? Write a short phrase in response to each. At the end of the week, look back over what you wrote and notice any patterns.

Writing Your Faith Story, Part 2: Naming the Turning Points

Return to the timeline you began last week. Circle two or three moments that changed the direction of your faith, times when you grew, struggled, doubted, let go of something, or took a new step. For each, write a short paragraph answering:

- What was happening in my life?
- How did I experience God, or wrestle with God, in that season?
- How was I different afterward?

Remember Paul's honesty in Philippians: your story doesn't need a tidy ending. It's okay for it to include questions and unfinished chapters. You are still becoming.

For Further Reflection

Read Philippians 1:3–11 and 2 Corinthians 3:17–18. Notice how Paul trusts God to complete the good work already begun in us.

Closing Prayer

Patient God, thank you for taking hold of us before we ever reached for you. Free us from the weight of what lies behind, from guilt that binds us and pride that stalls us. Give us grace to keep growing, humility to admit we are unfinished, and joy in pressing on toward your call in Christ Jesus. Amen.

NOVEMBER 22: *ALL I HAVE NEEDED*

Lamentations 3:21–25 • Proverbs 3:1–6

Opening Reflection

As Thanksgiving approaches, we naturally turn our attention to gratitude. Yet gratitude can be complicated. Some years overflow with blessing; others are marked by grief, uncertainty, or hardship. Faithful gratitude does not require pretending everything is fine. It requires noticing that God has been present and providing, even in places we wouldn't have chosen.

Lamentations was written amid the ruins of Jerusalem, and yet at its center stands a declaration of hope: God's faithful love does not end, and God's mercies are renewed every morning. How easy would it be to have faith if everything was easy and life had no troubles. But reality is that everything is not easy and life is full of troubles, and God is with us always.

Proverbs adds a practical wisdom: trust God wholeheartedly rather than leaning only on our own understanding. Gratitude and trust grow together; the more we recognize God's past provision, the more freely we can trust God with what lies ahead.

Discuss or Reflect

1. What is surprising about finding these hopeful words in the middle of a book of lament?
2. The writer says, "This I call to mind." Why is choosing what we call to mind important for faith?
3. What does it mean to you that God's mercies are new every morning?
4. Proverbs warns against relying only on our own understanding. Where is that hardest for you?
5. How can we hold honest grief and genuine gratitude at the same time?
6. When has God provided what you needed, even though it wasn't what you expected or wanted?
7. How might gratitude change the way we approach our Thanksgiving gatherings this year?

Formation Invitation

Each morning this week, before checking your phone or starting your tasks, pause and name one new mercy from the previous day. It might be small: a kind word, a good meal, an answered prayer, a moment of rest. Consider sharing your list with your family around the Thanksgiving table.

Writing Your Faith Story, Part 3: Telling the Story of God's Faithfulness

This week, bring your notes and paragraphs together into one story. A simple shape can help:

- **Where I began:** the people and places that first shaped your faith
- **Where God met me:** one or two of the turning points you wrote about last week
- **Where I am now:** how you see God's faithfulness today, and where you're still growing

Close with a sentence or two of gratitude, naming what God has provided along the way. When you're finished, read your story, then consider sharing it with your small group, a family member over Thanksgiving, or someone who might need encouragement. Your story is a testimony of the faithfulness of God.

For Further Reflection

Read Psalm 103 and Matthew 6:25–34. Notice how remembering God's benefits and trusting God's care for tomorrow belong together.

Closing Prayer

Faithful God, your love never ceases and your mercies meet us every morning. In seasons of plenty and seasons of loss, you have given us what we needed. Teach us to trust you with all our hearts, to remember your goodness, and to live with grateful lives that point others to your faithfulness. Amen.