

All Saints C
Peace, Seattle
November 3, 2013
Ephesians 1:11-23;

THE ONES THE SON SHINES THROUGH

Today we celebrate the faithful witness of men and women, young and old who have given themselves to living out the Gospel in their specific times and places relying on the promises of God. (By the way, this is your warning that I'll be asking you to do some sharing in a few moments, so better pay attention!)

What comes to mind when you think of the title “saint”? What’s your definition?

A father brought his son to chapel on the campus where he taught one bright, autumn day. Pointing to beautiful stained glass windows, the father said,

**Do you see those windows up there? Those windows show pictures of the saints.
Do you know who the saints are?**

Looking up at the brilliant windows, the boy thought for a moment, and said,
“Yes. The saints are the ones who the sun shines through.”¹

How’s that for a definition: Saints are the people the Son—S – O – N—shines through.

You don’t have to lead a mistake-free life to be a saint. You don’t have to be perfect. You simply own the truth that, in spite of failures and flaws, you too are a conduit of the light of Christ.

There’s a story about a man who went to a funeral of a friend.

And the longer the service went, and the more eloquently the preacher spoke about the deceased, the more confused the man became until, finally, when the sermon was over, he got up and started walking up the aisle toward the open casket.

Well, the preacher, not sure what was going on, comes down to meet the man, and says:
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, FRIEND?

And the man replies, SINCE I DIDN’T RECOGNIZE THE MAN I KNEW IN ANYTHING YOU SAID,
I WANTED TO BE SURE I WAS AT THE RIGHT FUNERAL!

It can be tempting to idolize or burnish the lives of those who’ve gone before us. To magnify their assets and erase their shadows, making them stand taller in death than they did in life.

But as Christians, we don’t have to worry about that. When St. Paul uses the title “saint” he doesn’t reserve it for the people who GOT IT ALL RIGHT, WHO HAD IT ALL TOGETHER. He uses it to describe everyone who’s been united with Christ in baptism.

Our status as beloved daughters and sons is God’s astounding gift to all who meet the risen One in baptismal waters; whose lives, because of that encounter, reflect and refract Christ in a billion different ways and directions.

¹ Image from W. Willimon, [Pulpit Resource](#).

Today as we remember the lives and witness of those whom the church has revered through the ages, we also remember the little people, the ordinary saints—those known to us in this congregation, and the many who have been swallowed up by history—who have learned to lean on the promises of God, whom Christ has shaped through water, word, and meal to be people who the Son shines through.

Who are those saints in your life; the people who, you could say, the Son has shone through?

- Maybe one of those saints for you has been a parent or grandparent.
- Or perhaps a teacher, friend, pastor, or neighbor.
- Maybe she's a writer, someone whose words have supported your growth in grace.
- Or maybe it was his wordless example that left the biggest impression.

Perhaps they are still living, still a source of encouragement for you.

For each of us there is at least one person we can name whose relationship with us has made a deep difference in how we understand God's grace and what it is to be a person of faith. One in whom the light of Christ has shone through.

I invite you to focus in on one person for a minute...Call them firmly to mind. Now please turn to a near neighbor and swap stories for a minute. READY—GO.

Thank you for sharing.

We are invited into a place of gratitude this morning, for all the ways that our lives have been touched by the faithful lives of ordinary people.

And as we gather around Christ's Table this morning, we gather with all those people who have learned to rely on the promises of God.

- We share the supper with the disciples in the upper room.
- We feast in the catacombs with the people of the Way.
- We break bread with our ancestors in the faith, and with future generations yet to be.
- And we affirm that, yes, we too are people who the Son is meant to shine through.

We trust that Christ's presence is so strong, so powerful in this simple meal that it stretches across the boundaries of time and space, binding us together, knitting us into a Holy Communion, a community forgiven and restored and equipped to be the presence of Christ in the world.

Being a Christian saint isn't about achieving a standard of holiness. It isn't about following a set of rules or checking off a series of boxes that earn us a special status with God. It's about recognizing in the cross of Christ the only true source of our hope, our light and salvation.

You are the only word from the Lord that many folks will ever hear. Why not live as people who the Son shines through?

Amen.