

The Minor Festivals of the Church Year

All Saints Day – November 1st

In the Christian Church Year, as the season of *Pentecost* comes to an end in the month of October, November begins the season of *The End Times*. It is a time when the church reflects upon the glories of heaven that await God's people. The season of *The End Times (November)* brings the Church Year to a close before the new Church Year begins with the *Advent Season (December)* as we prepare for the birth of Christ.

In our Lutheran Church, we celebrate the *Minor Festival: All Saints Day* on November 1st, in the season of *The End Times*, to thank God for those whom he has preserved in faith, whether still living upon the earth (*the Church Militant*), or those who have died and now reside with him in heaven (*the Church Triumphant*).

In the days of the early church, when Christianity was an outlawed religion, followers of Jesus were subjected to bitter persecution. Many were arrested and even killed for refusing to conform to secular authorities and renounce their religious beliefs. It was during this period of open hostility toward Christians that the church chose a day of the year on which to remember those who had been martyred, and to praise God for His mercy in preserving them in faith amidst the severe trials they faced.

The Apostle Paul uses the word *saint* to describe all believers whose hope for salvation is founded upon Christ. A saint is a "*holy person*" and all believers in Christ are made holy through the washing of Jesus' blood. Notice how Paul begins his letter to the Ephesian Christians, "*Paul, and apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus*" (*Ephesians 1:1*).

As present day believers (*saints*), we can derive much strength and comfort from those who have gone before us, holding on to the faith, preaching the gospel, and enduring all things, even death, for the sake of our Lord. All Saints Day is a reminder that we are part of the glorious band of blood-bought souls. We are among those whom Jesus purchased with His atoning death to be His own, and who will never be separated from His love. Despite the best efforts of Satan and the evils of this world to destroy the church of God, God's people will prevail...In the words of a favorite hymn,

*The Church shall never perish! Her dear Lord, to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish, Is with her to the end.
Though there be those that hate her And strive to see her fail,
Against both foe and traitor She ever shall prevail. (Christian Worship #538:3)*

As we recall saints of the past whom God preserved in their faith, we are encouraged to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as they did. We're reminded of the importance of setting our hearts on things above as they did, instead of on earthly things. It provides an opportunity to praise God for the redeeming love He has shown to unworthy sinners, and to be comforted by the prospect of the bright future that awaits all those who anchor their hopes in Christ.

*For all Your saints, O Lord, Who strove in You to live,
Who followed You, obeyed, adored, Our grateful hymn receive.*

*For all Your saints, O Lord, Who strove in You to die,
Who counted You their great Reward, Accept our thankful cry.*

*They all in life and death, With You, their Lord, in view,
Learned from Your Holy Spirit's breath To suffer and to do.*

*For this Your name we bless And humbly pray anew
That we like them in holiness May live and die in You. (Christian Worship, #555)*

Read **Matthew Chapter 10**.... as today's Scripture Lesson.

Blessings to you and your families,
Pastor Matthew Guse