

November 5 (All Saints Sunday)

Invitation to Worship

Psalm 34: 1-10, 22

¹*I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise will always be in my mouth.*

²*I praise the Lord—let the suffering listen and rejoice.*

³*Magnify the Lord with me! Together let us lift his name up high!*

⁴*I sought the Lord and he answered me. He delivered me from all my fears.*

⁵*Those who look to God will shine; their faces are never ashamed.*

⁶*This suffering person cried out: the Lord listened and saved him from every trouble.*

⁷*On every side, the Lord's messenger protects those who honor God;
and he delivers them.*

⁸*Taste and see how good the Lord is! The one who takes refuge in him is truly happy!*

⁹*You who are the Lord's holy ones, honor him,
because those who honor him don't lack a thing.*

¹⁰*Even strong young lions go without and get hungry,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.*

Hymn of Praise, *When We All Get to Heaven*, #701

Anthem

All Saints' Candle Lighting

All Saints Sunday is a time of remembering and honoring those who have gone before us into the presence of God. Today we will speak aloud the names of church members who have passed since last All Saints' Sunday, light a candle and ring a bell. After the roll has been read, we will continue with an opportunity for anyone to go to one of three stations set up with candles to be able to light a candle for anyone you want to remember in the presence of God this morning.

Let us remember:

Don Dixon,
Dorothy Dixon,
Ruby Burnett,
Mike Ambrose,
John Castle, Mary Castle,
Herb Castle, Nell Castle,
Marvin Morey

Offering

Children's Message (Tootsie Pops...hard outsides might still have tender insides)

Pastoral Prayer with The Lord's Prayer

Hymn of Preparation, *Do, Lord, Remember Me*, #527

Message

Our lesson today comes from the Old Testament book of Joshua. Joshua was chosen by God and taught by Moses who would lead the wandering people of Israel into the Promised Land. Hear now from Joshua.

Joshua 3: 7-17

⁷ The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to make you great in the opinion of all Israel. Then they will know that I will be with you in the same way that I was with Moses. ⁸ You are to command the priests who carry the covenant chest, 'As soon as you come to the bank of the Jordan, stand still in the Jordan.'"

⁹ Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come close. Listen to the words of the Lord your God." ¹⁰ Then Joshua said, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and will completely remove the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites before you. ¹¹ Look! The covenant chest of the ruler of the entire earth is going to cross over in front of you in the Jordan. ¹² Now pick twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one per tribe. ¹³ The soles of the priests' feet, who are carrying the chest of the Lord, ruler of the whole earth, will come to rest in the water of the Jordan. At that moment, the water of the Jordan will be cut off. The water flowing downstream will stand still in a single heap."

¹⁴ The people marched out from their tents to cross over the Jordan. The priests carrying the covenant chest were in front of the people. ¹⁵ When the priests who were carrying the chest came to the Jordan, their feet touched the edge of the water. The Jordan had overflowed its banks completely, the way it does during the entire harvest season. ¹⁶ But at that moment the water of the Jordan coming downstream stood still. It rose up as a single heap very far off, just below Adam, which is the city next to Zarethan. The water going down to the desert sea (that is, the Dead Sea) was cut off completely. The people crossed opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ So the priests carrying the Lord's covenant chest stood firmly on dry land in the middle of the Jordan. Meanwhile, all Israel crossed over on dry land, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

This is not the first time that God's people had to cross to the other side of a body of water to get where they were going. The Red Sea that parted by the power of God at Moses' request led them from slavery into freedom. Then they wandered around the desert for a couple generations because it took a while to shake off the mentality and yearning for being slaves. It took some time to learn to rely on God instead of their Egyptian rulers.

So, as it is with God, at the right time, God had Joshua lead the people from their time of wandering into a land of plenty...the promised land. God's people have always been a

people of promise. God's people have always lived on earth with a foretaste of heaven, with desires nothing on earth can quite fulfill.

To be God's people, then or now, is to be people on a journey – sometimes trapped in slavery to sin, sometimes wandering around doing our best to figure out just how to live in freedom, and at some point crossing over into the promised land.

All Saints' Day is a day for remembering, naming, and celebrating for those who have found their way to the promised land. In the meanwhile we are the ones finding our feet again. We are the ones standing so that they might take the next steps on their journey. It is a powerful position for us to stand as those we love leave us.

I consider these moments in the story of God's people to be comforting mysteries. These moments of passing through places that seem impassable. There is power in knowing that with God, there is always a way to find our feet. And I think there is something so inviting and powerful in the image of the soles of the priests feet standing firm while the people of Israel pass through the Jordan, out of the desert, and into the promised land.

As the body of Christ, we are the people of God. And we are on a journey. Our journeying together means that at some times and in some places we encounter rivers, obstacles that cannot be navigated on foot, cannot be navigated alone.

There are some moments in our lives – moments of loss and grief that include not only death of loved ones, but the loss of relationships, loss of jobs, even the loss of dreams when life just doesn't go as we had expected – and in these moments of grief we need those who will step into the water, step in and be the placeholders who cooperate with God to allow us to keep moving safely from life as we've known it and into life as it will now be.

Basically, we need each other at times of transition. We need to know that someone's feet are on the ground, standing firm, while the things of life heap up on one side and get cut off on another. We need to know that we have a safe passage through the tricky, tough to navigate parts of this journey.

And together we have that. We know that God is in all and through all, but together, not alone or in isolation, we make the journey better. And sometimes we are the ones standing in the mud for someone else as they need safe passage from one part of life to another, while at other times we are the ones needing to walk on through.

And at some point, the movement from one part of life to another is complete. At some point the waters are released and flow as they always have again. At some point those who have held the precious presence of the Lord and stood their ground for us see that we have made it to the other side and move along as well.

This is part of the ebb and flow of who we are for one another as parts of the body of Christ, the church. And it's not that kindnesses aren't shared by persons who aren't part of the people of God officially as members of the church, but it is a defined, called and sacred duty of those who are the church.

We are a people who journey together through life and as we journey we are sensitive to where God is leading, how God is moving, and what is going on in our own lives. And we navigate forward together. Sometimes with great rejoicing, sometimes with careful steps, and sometimes with someone gently encouraging us on from somewhere in the back.

But to be alive, to be part of the creation of Almighty God, is to ever be on a journey of some kind. We might be walking the narrow way with Jesus and enjoying his company. We might be walking the wide road that leads to ruin. We might be straying to the right or to the left, but we are journeying. We are traveling from one place to another all through our lives.

Today we are mindful that we lose some of our traveling companions along the way. But the great good news for those who die in Christ are going ahead of us while we continue to walk with others. And they simply move on ahead of us to await a glorious reunion that is coming for one day. There will be a day with no more mourning or crying or pain, there will be a place where God is on the throne and everyone worships God and God alone. There will be a day when the promised land is the land we call home.

And in these moments, as we gather in worship, we enjoy a foretaste of that day and that place because we are together in the presence of God. And part of looking forward to our reunion on that day is the celebration of Holy Communion on this day. The table of grace has been prepared for us today. The table over which Jesus is the host. Jesus invites us to hold place for one another, fueled by the grace he provides.

Let us share now in the invitation to this meal of grace that gives us a glimpse of the heavenly banquets to come...