

## 1 Sermon, November 4, 2012

Texts: Colossians 1:1-12

Title: "I Am No Saint?"

1. Intro
2. Saints are God's people
3. Saints are the ones who are doing the best they can
3. The Mom, who midst dementia, gave an ad to her daughter
4. The little girl who spreads joy all around from her wheelchair
5. The guy who lived alone, made questionable venison sausage, and ushered in church because he didn't want to give
6. The one who always seems to know what to say at the right time

### 1. Intro

Every year, on the first Sunday in November, we celebrate All Saints day.

It might seem an odd thing in a denomination that doesn't have official saints. We don't have a day set aside for Saint Gregory the Great, or Saint Teresa of Avila or Saint Francis of Assisi.

But today we are recognizing some special saints who lived among us who died in the last year.

We celebrate Bernadine Graper and her kindness.

We celebrate Jessie Zuehlke and her abundant outlook on life.

We celebrate Mary Sramek and her peaceful ways.

We celebrate Barbara Ott – who is not so easy to describe.

These people were saints.

If you'd asked them, they probably would have denied it.

They probably would have said, "I'm no saint."

But they were saints – in fact, if you're trying to love God, you're a saint, too.

### 2. Saints are God's people

In the Bible, the word "saints" refers to holy people — holy, however, not because they did only good things, but because they were specially marked out as God's people.

Today's reading, and many of the New Testament letters (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians and Philippians) begin with a greeting that includes the word "saints" such as, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia."

## 2 Sermon, November 4, 2012

In the New Testament, the word "saint" refers to someone who God is making holy through Christ's love. It especially refers to the ones who have held onto Christ the longest. Saints are God's possession (Acts 9.13), God's beloved (Romans 1.7), and God has called them.

The word "saint" comes from the same root as the word "sanctified," or made holy. To be a saint, you don't have to do amazing things, you just have to love the one who makes us holy, who sanctifies us.

### 3. Saints are the ones who are doing the best they can

To paraphrase a bumper sticker, saints are not perfect, they're just forgiven.

That's why we spend one Sunday a year acknowledging how God has put saints in our midst, and even acknowledging that God is working to sanctify us – those of us who accept Christ's love and know they are not perfect – just forgiven.

I want to read you again today's passage from Colossians. I'd like you to listen to the way Colossians describes Christians not as finished products, but as those who are growing and learning.

"... Grace to you and peace from God our Father. In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God....

For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." Colossians 1:1-12, NRSV.

### 3 Sermon, November 4, 2012

Those Christians at Colossae were not extraordinary people, but God was doing things in them. The gospel was bearing fruit among them. They had love for the people of God everywhere.

And the potential was in those ordinary people for them to be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding, and to grow in the knowledge of God. God's power could make them strong and patient, enduring difficulties joyfully.

#### 3. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt

My point today is that *you* are saints – at least when you try to follow Jesus. You are saints – and it doesn't matter how old you are or physically capable you are. It doesn't matter the color of your skin or your gender or any of the other categories we humans place on ourselves. If you want to follow Jesus, and if you try to follow Jesus, you're a saint.

Give yourself the benefit of the doubt. Believe it. God can work through you. We're not finished products.

If you look at the disciples, they were not perfect people. They were subject to temptations of greed and laziness, inappropriate zeal, jealousy and more.

The people we commonly call saints were not perfect. If you look on the list of the saints that the Catholic church officially recognizes, many of them had a disability. Most of them struggled with an inferiority complex, feeling they were not good enough. Most of them had efforts that failed.

I invite you to claim your sainthood. Wear it lightly, not as a thing to brag about, but as a way to claim that God loves you. God has a desire to work through you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## 4 Sermon, November 4, 2012

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." Colossians 1:1-12, NRSV.

Colossians 1:1-12

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

1 From Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from Timothy, who is also a follower.  
2 To God's people who live in Colossae and are faithful followers of Christ.  
I pray that God our Father will be kind to you and will bless you with peace!  
3 Each time we pray for you, we thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 We have heard of your faith in Christ and of your love for all of God's people, 5 because what you hope for is kept safe for you in heaven. You first heard about this hope when you believed the true message, which is the good news.  
6 The good news is spreading all over the world with great success. It has spread in that same way among you, ever since the first day you learned the truth about God's wonderful kindness  
7 from our good friend Epaphras. He works together with us for Christ and is a faithful worker for you.<sup>[a]</sup> 8 He is also the one who told us about the love that God's Spirit has given you.  
9 We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives. 10 Then you will live a life that honors the Lord, and you will always please him by doing good deeds. You will come to know God even better. 11 His

## 5 Sermon, November 4, 2012

glorious power will make you patient and strong enough to endure anything, and you will be truly happy.

12 I pray that you will be grateful to God for letting you<sup>[b]</sup> have part in what he has promised his people in the kingdom of light.

Colossians 1:1-12

Common English Bible (CEB)

**1** From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother.

2 To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

3 We always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. 4 We've done this since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all God's people. 5 You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, 6 which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God's grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. 7 You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ's faithful minister for your sake. 8 He informed us of your love in the Spirit. 9 Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding. 10 We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; 11 by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience; 12 and by giving thanks with joy to the Father. He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people.