

“NONE TOO SMALL”

Pastor Mike Corwin

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

TEXT: LUKE 19:1-10

GOD’S WORD: HEBREWS 12:1-14

I – CLOUD OF WITNESSES:

There is a wonderful piece of artwork by Ron DiCianni called “The Legacy.” It is a painting of a preacher standing in the pulpit and off to each side of him is a line of people who you have to believe were God’s preachers and prophets in the past. They are witnesses to the legacy that started from the very beginning of time with God’s prophets and continues on to this very day. I get the vision that each and every time I stand before you and bring you the Word of God I am able to do so because other great men and women have gone before me and laid the ground work, paved the way, for me. It reminds me that I am in excellent company as I carry out my calling to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want you to realize today that you don’t have to be a preacher to enjoy this great cloud of witnesses. Every time I read the passage from Hebrews you heard earlier I am reminded that we did not start the journey of faith alone, nor are we the first to tread the path. There have been many before us. Many who have led the way and given us an example to follow. And I’m not talking about the super heroes of the Bible. I’m talking about those of faith who helped you along the way. I’m talking about preachers and Sunday school teachers. I’m talking about those who shook your hand on Sunday morning, or those who helped you out the rest of the week. I’m talking about grandparents and parents and anyone else who showed you faith by the way they lived, talked, acted, or how they drug you to church. I’m talking about those 10 people we recognized this morning as the saints of our church now residing with all the saints in heaven.

II – WHO?:

So obviously the question becomes who gets to be a saint. How good do I have to be to make it to sainthood? I'll never live up to the likes of John Wesley or Mother Teresa. Can I put enough money in the plate to be a saint? Can I serve enough meals to be a saint? Do I have to put on a habit and hold dying people in Calcutta, India to make it? How perfect does my attendance at church need to be? How kind does my mouth have to be?

We come away with the image that I have to be a saint to be a saint! If that were the case then the cloud of witnesses surely wouldn't take up much room in heaven.

Anyone of us can be a saint. To be a believer is to be a saint. This is the day we recognize the tradition of the church where we celebrate the unity between the saints still living and the saints that have gone on before us. That have become that great cloud of unseen witnesses.

III – TEXT:

And again... anyone, no matter how good or how bad, can be a saint. Can be in the congregation here or the cloud there. That's the story I see in this morning's familiar text from the Gospel of Luke. The story of Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:1-10 (NLT)

19 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ²There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

⁵When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

⁶Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”

⁹ Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

It’s a well know story if you’ve had any contact with the church over the years. A story we used to sing about in the old, old days of Bible school. The story of a rich tax collector who was born a Jewish child and raised that way but somewhere along the line had sold out to the Romans and was acting as a tax collector for them. A man who had lost his ethics and scruples. He collected the taxes for the Romans but then collected a little (or a lot) for himself too. Because of this he had been disowned by the Jewish people and considered to no longer be a son of Abraham. Thus having no grace or God to watch over him and save him. He was doomed in their eyes.

Then one day he heard about this man named Jesus who was coming to town. We are told that Zacchaeus was a short little fellow and couldn’t see over the crowd so he climbed a tree to get a glimpse of this man they were saying was the promised Messiah. The people may have considered him a turncoat and a cheat but Jesus saw something in him and called him down so he could go and eat a meal with him. This displeased the people greatly and the good church people started grumbling and gossiping. Called him a notorious sinner.

But as the story develops we see that Zacchaeus has an obvious change of heart and makes amends for his past and Jesus declared that Salvation had come to that house and he was again a son of Abraham.

Zacchaeus, who had been a “notorious sinner” had become a “saint.” If he could...then anyone could. That great cloud of witnesses Hebrews talks about is made up of those we would call liars, cheats, murderers, adulterers, and others we would consider unlikely saints. And yet God called them and used them to do his work, and put them in that cloud of witnesses with all the others.

IV – EVERYONE:

There is a reference in our faith about all of us sitting together at a great banquet table in heaven. As I'm talking to those who are passing I use that image as I tell them that when they get there to save me a seat at the table, that I'll be along shortly, and tell St. Peter I want mine to be medium rare.

My fear is that some of the ones I would love to eat that meal with may not be there.

The last line of that text tells me that Jesus wants everyone to achieve sainthood as he states "The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." That tells me that Jesus doesn't want even one empty chair around that table. That Jesus is working in the world to seek, find, nudge, invite, corral, welcome, and redeem all those who have turned their backs on the purpose God created them for. That he came to restore people to the image of God they were created in. To bring spiritual renewal and health to all of us and our communities.

As Zacchaeus experienced it:

- Salvation crosses all boundaries.
- Requires our participation.
- Involves communities.
- Fulfills God's eternal purpose.

V – SAINTS:

On this All Saints Sunday and we celebrate those who have gone on before us I have two questions for you:

1. Who were your saints? Who brought you to the faith?
2. Who are you being a saint for? Who will one day consider you to be in their cloud of witnesses?

We must be saints to all we know so there are no empty chairs at the table.

AMEN