Sermon- All Saints Day 2022 Nov. 5th & 6th

Title: “Which? Sinner or Saint?”

Text: Rev. 7:9-17, 1 John 3:1-3, Math. 5:1-12

Prelude- Pastoral greeting

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

**Good morning, Sinner! Good morning, Saint! When you woke up this morning and did your devotions, remembering your baptism with the sign of the cross, saying the morning prayer, and thanking God for all He has done, did you consider which of these people you were? If we are honest with ourselves and are able to spiritually discern what we are according to scripture, we know for a fact that we are sinners, lost without a way of reconciling with God without help. And those who have gone before us, they too, had to determine what they were as well. Under the Law, God had shown the people of Israel the way for them to go, the way to follow Him and remain in fellowship with Him. Both God and His people soon learned that to follow the Law comes the knowledge of sin. They found out that they were sinners. For not one man, woman or child could follow the Law perfectly as God intended. To do so was simply impossible. Job declared this in his words saying, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. What is man that he can be pure?”**

**Job knew that Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and you would think that this knowledge would penetrate deep into the soul of man so he would never forget what is purely “good”, like he was to start, and purely “evil” as he had become. But I have to say that that first sin has blinded us to even recognizing *that* knowledge, that is how purely evil our condition became and how it is to this day. Even though God has written His Law on our hearts, we still can’t see nor discern what is good and what is evil. Why do I say that?**

**In our day and age of humanism and all the other isms we struggle against, there is only evil, good, and grey on a sliding scale, and no distinct black or white. Relativism reigns, and Biblical truth is only truth in so much as your own interpretation goes. I have had many people say, “Well that’s your interpretation”. Then I point out that scripture interprets scripture, and many times, the conversation ends in a huff. Other times I am gracious and let them develop on their path. For you see, many people can’t see yet nor want to see what is evil and what is good. How is it done? It takes intense comparative study. With scripture interpreting scripture, for only in the Word, objective truth is found. This is why we have so many denominations. It is also why through the Reformation that we celebrated last week, we have a Lutheran Synod that believes what it believes, so that we walk with those that believe like one another.**

**Therefore, as we know we are sinners from scripture, let’s look at the texts I’ve chosen for today and start there.**

**Law**

**Both in First John and in the Revelation texts, the theme is PRAISE from a great many people. Why? Because they are saved, counted, redeemed, and included as children of God. That means all of these people in heaven that John has seen have been saved from something. What is that? Sin and the power of the Devil. Remove the “D” from devil and what do you have? Evil. Today, some people are so blind that they don’t recognize that the devil exists at all. This is contrary to scripture. Jesus was tempted in the desert by him, to give you an example from scripture. The devil exists. Today, that same devil tempts us likewise, so that he may confuse us, trick us, and blind us to that same old lie he told Eve, “You won’t die!” But to not be able to discern what is good or evil shows just how deeply we have gone into sin since the fall. We are falling deeper and deeper for lie upon lie upon lie.**

**Today, that is so true, and we must try to discern every day, what is true and what is false. They say that the world doubles its knowledge every twelve days. Consider that, for it makes one feel very ignorant and only a computer could store so much in its memory. Compare that to 1970 when a good encyclopedia set would do. To be able to discern the good from the evil in all that information is seemingly- impossible. Or is it? Especially in the world on the secular day of Halloween. Confusing much?**

**We must, as the bride of Christ, His Saints, use the Scriptures to discern this and many other things as we live in the world, so that we are not tempted by the devil and his demons to become part of it. If we do fall to these temptations, we become just like those of the world that John said in verse one of the text that, “does not know us because it did not know Him.” We have to make many decisions every day in order to live in the world: To make a living, to protect our families, to keep from sinning. In order to keep from becoming like those that do not believe and abide in Christ. That is a huge battle we fight every day! Some people go to their horoscopes or to seers with crystal balls, which is also found in the Bible, but it is unequivocally condemned.**

 **But, if we are in Christ, the Holy Spirit guides us and helps us. He places the Word right in our face when we are tempted to make the wrong decision. To be kept strong then, as warriors for Christ, we put on a heavenly costume, the armor of God Paul speaks of. In order for it not to become rusty, one must allow the Spirit to lead, to use the right piece at the right time when you make those eternal decisions you do each day. The Comforter (because that’s what He is when He helps us), will as Jesus promised, show us the way unto salvation. It’s almost like He grabs you and shakes you saying, “Don’t do that! Remember what you were taught!” And He teaches us so many things in todays’ Gospel text, in the Beatitudes.**

**This would be a great place for me to insert all of the issues of the day. I don’t have to however, for you know what they are. You have been made wise by the Spirit, not woke by the devil. I don’t have to stand here and tell you if this or that is wrong or evil. The Spirit does that. Listen to Him! You can’t do that if you are not here---every- single- week! That listening, is what has happened since Pentecost to all the saints whom God has sent the Spirit to. And they have done so, for in John’s vision, if it were not for the Holy Spirit, heaven would have been empty, for we and all men are sinners to the core and we allow the evil one to lead us to be just like Adam and Eve. We are naturally sinners.**

**Gospel**

**So, you are thinking, “Pastor, how can I be in this great cloud of witnesses, all these saints in the great multitude?” Only by this, for we find in the catechism these words, “We find salvation only in the Gospel, which tells us that Christ as our Substitute fulfilled the Law and suffered and died for us.” On the cross Christ redeemed us by becoming the curse for us for the Word says, “Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree****.”**

**When Christ sat on the hill and taught us how we are blessed, He could have said just this: “Walk with me. Come with me towards Jerusalem.” He could have shown them all these things in practice. However, in His great discourse, He gave an example of a perfectly divided sermon. He first told them how they were sinners and then how they were to be blessed. How they could be in this great cloud of witnesses. Indeed, the catechism is correct, we find salvation only in His Gospel. In Baptism, you were joined to Christ, and you became a child of God and one who the Spirit indwells. And this is such Good News! And it is for us all, offered and received by those we will be joining in heaven. They are from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. All those that the Spirit has sanctified and brought to faith in Christ and led from the sinful mindset that is hostile to God and that proclaims us sinners.**

 **But we, who are so removed from His time on earth, we walk with and through the work of the Spirit, and we are strengthened in the faith, enabling us to lead the godly life. To be able to discern between good and evil. He leads us here- to His Words on the hill. All our ancestors that remained in this faith, are here, watching and waiting, just like we who watch and wait for the return of the Lord and keep our lamps full of the Spirit. We who are saved by grace though faith and not by our works. And when we join that glorious throng, clothed in white robes, we will proclaim along with them, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!”**

**When the blue hymnal came out in 1982, I was amazed. How so? It was the song, “This is the Feast”. I said, even audibly the first time I saw and sang it, “Wow”. For you see, it is by the power of the Spirit it should be sung now before we sing it in heaven, for in verse 12 of the text it says, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.” We, the faithful, the Saints of God who remain in Christ until the end, will receive this blessing promised to us.**

**Conclusion/Application**

 **So now you know which of these two you are, sinner or saint. In this life a Sinner of great magnitude. But, at the same time you are also a Saint, saved by God by His Son, and preserved by the Holy Spirit in your daily battles. You are able to know what is good and evil by the power of the Word. We need not search for answers anywhere else. There is no other place to go, for He has the words of eternal life. Alleluia! We sing that, too! May we all look forward to our sure hope in the Gospel of Christ until His return, waiting in eager expectation, that we may join our loved ones and our great King for eternity.** **And while we wait, the Spirit leads us to tell others all about what Christ has done and that He is on His way as He promised. When I talk about these things with friends, I think that even Christians think I’m a nut job. So many scoff at the idea that this world will ever change and especially that Christ will ever come. Are they ever going to be surprised! Listen to these words of prophecy for our future and comfort in our present in the text:**

 **Rev. 7: 15-17 “Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them.**

**They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”**

**Let us pray: Almighty God, by the death of your Son Jesus Christ, You destroyed death, by His rest in the tomb, you sanctified the graves of your saints and by His bodily resurrection You brought life and immortality to light so that all who die in Him abide in peace and hope. Receive our thanks for His victory over death and the grave that He won for us. Keep us in everlasting communion with all who wait for Him on earth and with all who are in heaven with Him, for He is the resurrection and the life, even Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. Come Lord Jesus!**

**May the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your minds and hearts in Christ Jesus. Amen.**