

Sermon for ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY, Nov 2, 2008  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Kansas City, MO.  
Offered by The Rev. Anne Hutcherson at 8:00 AM

Revelation 7:9-17  
Psalm 34:1-10, 22  
I John 3:1-13  
Matthew 5:1-12

We've got twelve minutes to address a multiplicity of themes! There's BAPTISM—we will be renewing our baptismal vows, and at 10:15, we'll welcome three babies into our household of God, the communion of all the saints. The Holy Spirit will mark them as Christ's own, and they will be born to new life! Amen!

We're celebrating EVANGELISM—a not-so-popular term among Episcopalians as we envision ourselves knocking on doors to talk religion or, worse, standing on street corners to proclaim the Good News. But we've heard from our own Dr. Sean Kim—distinguished professor—Evangelism is a part of who we are as Christians-- and can be appropriately—and acceptably—Anglican! Evangelism is a way of loving, of sharing the story of God's love and inviting every man, woman, and child “from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages”<sup>1</sup> to live abundantly in God's kingdom. Amen!

And, we're still dealing with STEWARDSHIP—talking about how we cherish and care for what we have while *building a future* that is more about self-giving than self-preservation. Amen!

And, the GOSPEL—the imperatives about blessedness (as opposed to cursedness)—blessed are those who mourn and hunger for righteousness, who are meek and poor of spirit—these seem contradictory to all we've been taught about achieving success. Yet that *is* the foundation for celebrating ALL SAINTS DAY, our overriding theme—which on November 2 is

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 7:9

really a combined celebrating of all Saints and all Souls. Which is why today we will be praying the names of all who have departed this life. Amen.

Baptism. Evangelism. Stewardship. All Saints/Souls Sunday: throughout these themes, anxiety lurks, fueled by an economy that has caused one futurist to characterize our age as one of “Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity.”<sup>2</sup> Plus, there is anxiety as we prepare to vote just two days from now. I’m not going to suggest *who* to vote for, but I am going to request that you vote—vote as a member of the communion of the Saints. Cast your vote/life for God, by voting thoughtfully, as you believe you are called to live.

Whew! This makes me think we would have done well to bring picnic lunches and take a break midway through the service! Well, we won’t overstay! Instead, let’s look for a common thread that weaves through these themes of saints and souls, stewardship and evangelism, bound together under the seal of baptism.

Our chancel and sanctuary introduce us to a vast array of saints, both canonized and uncanonized —of those who lived exemplary Christian lives—note I did not say *perfect* lives. In other words, their standards are attainable!

This pulpit, for example, is dedicated to Dr. Earl Jewell, often referred to as the “militant Dr. Jewell.” I’ve been reminded to step into this pulpit with respect. And I do! As I do, however, I’ve pondered the use of “militant” in describing him. I’m sure there are several reasons, but I have concluded that this firm, no-nonsense—sometimes imperfect—churchman, was, first and foremost, militant in his love—of God, family, this church. The message is clear: people should know we are Christians by our love!

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<sup>2</sup> Bob Johansen, “Conversation on Faith in the Future,” Trinity Church, as accessed Oct. 9, 2008 at <http://www.onajourney.org/caj/publications/meditation/20081009.isp>.

Another of his militant beliefs is expressed in *The Spirit of St. Andrew's*, the first 50 years: “The Christian. . . maintains a thankful heart and is humble enough to realize from whence cometh all blessings.”<sup>3</sup>

Love. Be thankful. Amen!

One of our stained glass saints is St. John, the beloved disciple and apostle who wrote our first two readings today. John believed that we are already living our eternal life, that we have a responsibility about *how* we live it. He spoke in terms of living in the Light of certain Hope—a hope grounded in the knowledge of our eventual heavenly home with all the saints. Yet for now, we are to shine God’s light lavishly –which is another way of saying that we are to be more about giving than taking. I think this sounds a lot like our stewardship campaign theme!

Updated summary: Love. Be Thankful. Give. *Amen!*

Take a look at the St. Matthew’s window when you’re up here next. The Altar Guild gave it as a thank offering: saints honoring another saint! I’d like to share a brief and true story about the St. Matthew window!

In the lower right corner there is a blond haired angel kneeling. A friend who used to worship here saw the angel as another blond girl like herself! She would look at the “girl” Sunday after Sunday and one day she heard the message! The angel had come to call her to God’s work as a priest, and today she is an Episcopal priest. Yes, the saints still speak! What message from God is being spoken to you this morning? How are you to love, thank and give?

Paul, tough, stern—even a bit disagreeable! But he’s a saint and we honor him with a window. He left us with the ultimate legacy of hope when he said in his letter to the Romans: “Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” And in that hope he taught us of

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<sup>3</sup> *The Spirit of St. Andrew's*, 6.

our responsibility to be missionaries—here’s that *evangelism* theme again—to spread the gospel “with the sword of the spirit, the shield of faith.”<sup>4</sup>

Updated Summary: Love. Be Thankful. Give. Hope. Share the gospel life. *Amen!*

Everywhere we look there are brass plates and bronze plaques shining in the glory of our past. These represent the great cloud of witnesses who testify to us this morning. But what of the present?

Look to the magnificent windows high above the altar: Jesus, arms open in invitation. To His right, Andrew; to His left, Peter, holding the keys to the Kingdom. Everywhere, pictorial stories and crosses, flaming torches and rays of light, grapes and holy monograms. But what I find particularly beckoning this All Saints, Stewardship, Evangelism, Baptism Sunday are the pomegranates decorating each window! My interest is not piqued by my attention on a popular health food but rather by their bursting, luscious abundance—The Pomegranate, bursting its sweet symbolic seeds of Resurrection. New Life begun at Baptism and continued each time we receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Could it be we have found our common thematic thread? I am speaking of **GENEROSITY**. We saints-in-the-making are called to be Generous with our loving, our thanksgiving and our giving of time, money and self. Generous with our hope. Generous with our sharing the gospel life. Generous spirits do not give God the leftovers but rather give to God every part of our being, “our hopes, our dreams, our careers, our relationships, our task lists, our wallets.”<sup>5</sup>

Our legacy at St. Andrew’s as been founded on that kind of generosity, and it is that same generous spirit we are called to imitate today. It is an imitating of Christ. **Perhaps this is the**

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<sup>4</sup> Grace Terrill Lawler, *A Journey through the Church: A guided tour of the Episcopal Church*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Craig T. Kocher, *Lectionary Homiletics* as accessed Oct 11 2008 at [www.goodpreacher.com](http://www.goodpreacher.com).

**investment strategy that God calls us to make, even in these uncertain times. It is after all quite possible that the times are uncertain precisely because we've been busy investing elsewhere!**

Let us pray:

Lord: “Make us give gladly like you, receiving joyfully of you but not *taking*, giving in abundance, not taking, giving in joy, not taking, giving as he gave himself up for us all, giving, *never taking*.<sup>6</sup>

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Brueggeman, adapted from “We are takers,” *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth*, ed. Edwin Searcy (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Revelation 22:21.