

November 7, 2021

BLESS: SAINTS SERVE

Rev. Gina Hendrickson

Ephesians 1:15-19

Jim or Jess

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

How amazing it is to celebrate the many ways of being BLESSED
on All Saints Sunday!

A time each year when we pause and acknowledge the faithful members of
First UMC who have died since last All Saints.

We will honor each as part of our Communion liturgy, and also light a candle to
honor and name other beloved saints we each have lost this past year.

For all the Saints...we praise God...who from their labors rest!

But you know Saints don't just belong in the heavenly realm,
Saints are alive right here, right now too.

As was just read, Paul said to the church in Ephesus-

SLIDE



“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus
AND your love toward all the saints” (1:15).

It's important to realize that whenever Paul speaks of "saints" in his letters,
he is talking about members of the church,
meaning a group of people who've been chosen by God
and set apart to do God's work in the world.

So Paul's talking about YOU...each and everyone of you here this morning...
And all of you online...
And he's talking to Pastor Jess, Norm/Donna,
He's talking to you Sue and Karen/John...and me too!

SLIDE



Together we are a group of people who have been chosen by God...
Set apart...called to do God's work in the world.

Saints find a way to BLESS others AND
Saints help bring God's love & hope into a hurting world.

So here is where Paul helps us think about our faith practices,
As we continue in our BLESS Preaching Series.

Remember Pastor Jess said it all Begins with Prayer,
then I added the powerful gift of Listening last week and
new from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we explore another BLESS practice.

To BLESS others—SAINTS SERVE.

How are we blessed to be a blessing? By our willingness to SERVE.

While there is much that can be unpacked in today's scripture reading,
I want us to just immerse ourselves in the 15th verse of chapter one.

Paul says to Christ's disciples, his followers:

"I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus AND your love toward all the saints."

Paul knows who they are because of their faithful love in action.

Friends, our lives also reveal our faith and our love—

When we're engaged in Christ-like actions and service.

So, Like Prayer...like Deep Listening...

SERVING can reveal the Love of Christ

to a world desperately in need of human touch and compassion.

St. Teresa of Avila put it beautifully this way in the 1500's:

SLIDE:



Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes...
through which he looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet...
with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands...
through which he blesses all the world.

So powerful right?

Christ has no body but ours...to serve and be his hands, his feet,
his eyes, his ears, his mouth.

In the 1st days of the early church,
the saints were part of a community of love and concern,
one in which love was demonstrated by acts of practical service. **SLIDE**



Just listen to some examples of 1st century saints in action:

*In Acts 6, one of the 1st things the early Christians did was organize a diaconate (a system) to make certain that widows & the needy got some relief (Acts 6:1-7).

So Saints organize relief & care;

~Which sounds like our UMCOR (United Methodist Committee of Relief)
& our GNJ Future with Hope & Miracles Everywhere Campaigns.

~Or First Church's collecting flood bucket supplies, Diapers, and food items
For so many who are in need right now...
in all the communities that surround us..

*Paul also wrote to the Romans (12:13),

“Contribute to the needs of the saints, extend hospitality to strangers”

And in 1Tim 5:10,

Widows in the Christian community were commended for showing hospitality,
washing the feet of the saints and helping the afflicted.

Oh Saints of God here at First Church, every outside group we host as a church,
Every social service agency supported,
Every smile & welcome extended as someone enters morning worship
Every Concert we host throughout the year
Every coffee hour, every prayer quilt stitched, every car trunk decorated last wk,
Every card written to a shut-in or sick person, every ride given to help someone
with groceries, or a doctor visit, or be able to come to youth group or worship...
Is a BLESSING gift of hospitality and love in action!
All Saints Serving in incredible ways to countless individuals.

*The Apostle Paul also spearheaded a collection for the church in Jerusalem
as revealed in his 2nd letter to the disciples in Corinth (2Cor 8:4),
and he described it as a special “ministry to the saints.”

So again, saints reveal Christ’s love through a giving spirit.

We continue this Scriptural model by our:

- ~ Faith Promise commitments to 19 missionaries AND
- ~Thru our weekly tithe and our annual Stewardship Pledge drive coming
next February & tithes to support all the ministries we do here at First.

*With every offering we make, we serve others through our treasure...
Through the grateful giving out of our abundance.

Today, as in the earliest days of the church,
We can thank God that there are Saints all around us!

SLIDE



We remember all the Saints who have gone before us
and who rest from their labors...their service for the Lord.

As we read their names in just a few minutes...
and think of so many more within our hearts...

We KNOW the impact their love and service meant to us...

Their impact upon their families...to their communities...

And to the church of Christ.

They shine now through us!

Saints reveal the love and light of God.

And as we are called to BLESS others,

Let us remember that Saints SERVE as we allow the Holy Spirit of God

To reside within us, flow through us and out to all in need.

For all the Saints...I am so grateful and praise our awesome and powerful God!