

“Lifestyles of the Everyday and Ordinary!”

All Saints’ Sunday November 2, 2014

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TEACHING POINTS:

1. TV Series “The Lifestyle of the Rich and Famous.”
2. God’s perspective is the lifestyle of the Everyday and Ordinary.
3. Two points:
 - a. Revelation: “Tribulation” means something like “the grind”. We need hope for our “daily grind.”
 - b. The Beatitudes: An outline of how God wants to love us. They are about God’s care in the “grind.”
4. The Good News is we are the saints of God! We are not “left out” (play ground) but included. We are the “saints of God”. We are “plan A” and that’s the only plan God has!

About 25 years ago (from 1984 - 1995 to be exact) there was a Television Series titled “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous”. The show featured the usually extravagant lifestyles of wealthy entertainers, athletes and business moguls -- everyday lives of extra-ordinary people.

The series satisfied some human curiosity, but didn’t have anything to do with the everyday lives of ordinary people.

All Saints Sunday honors the lives of everyday people, God’s people. Saints are God’s ordinary people. Saints are everyday, ordinary people living the everyday ordinary. Saints are the church. We are the church, we are saints.

Saints are everyday people like Sojourner Truth who worked to gain freedom from slavery and preached a gospel of liberation.

Saints are everyday people like Albert Schweitzer who gave his life as a missionary and doctor in Africa when he could have stayed “home”.

Saints are everyday people like Martin Luther King, Jr., who dedicated his life trying to end racial discrimination in America.

Saints are everyday people like Lynne, fired from her job because her skill and dedication made others uncomfortable in the work place.

Or everyday people like Mary, a single mother trying to make ends meet by working long hours while caring for a sick child.

Or everyday people like Jane, caring for her dying father.

Or everyday people like Al, a widow with teenaged children.

Or, dare I say it, everyday people like “Joe the plumber” or Pete the shop owner, or Jay the laborer, or Anne the nurse, or Jane the volunteer in retirement, or (insert your name).

All Saints Day is about us, God's ordinary people, living in faith in rather ordinary ways. It celebrates everyone who has lived in faith under God. The stories of all saints remind us of who we are, what we believe and what we can become. Saints past and present remind us how closely we can follow the example of Jesus. They draw us forward, give us courage, strengthen us to do God's will and lead the way!!

Two points: We are connected to all God's people. Our connection with them helps us keep from growing weary on our often-difficult Christian pilgrimages.

One: Let's take a look at Revelation. It has to do with the "tribulation". The tribulation has to do with the "grinding." It has to do with "affliction". It has to do with part of life where we grow weary — being caught between a rock and a hard place, of being in that place where daily pressures grind heavy on our Christian calling. Maybe that's where we get terms like "the daily grind".

The wonderful point, as one looks at Revelations, is the praise and honor and glory that is given to God because there is an end to the "tribulation". There is a time of passing into the presence of God. There is the time of resting from labor. There is hope as we live in the wearing journey and pilgrimage of life.

Remembering the witness of the saints allows us to continue to hold them close and can give us strength. Remembering their witnesses can help us feel God's comforting touch when we are discouraged or sorrowful and can help raise us up when we fall.

The saints call us to an awareness of God's peace that surpasses human knowing. They help keep us from presuming too much about our own strength. They teach us to trust in the one who has loved us beyond all measure.

We can't keep from crying, but he wipes away our tears.
We can't keep from being hungry, but he nourishes us.
We can't keep from thirsting, but he quenches our thirst.
We can't find shade, but he keeps sheltering us.

And hence: the truth about the beatitudes. For too long, I've been guilty (as most of us are) of looking at these wonderful sayings as being mostly about us. The Beatitudes are more about God. They are all about God. They are about God's care for us in the tribulations—in the grinding of poverty, hunger, sickness, mourning, peacemaking and all the rest.

You see, the Beatitudes push God's people to look beyond our limitations and believe that we have the potential to respond to God with faith and hope.

We don't want to be left out of this picture. Being left out is one of life's most painful experiences. You remember how it was as a child on the playground? I don't know about you, but I always hated it when the time came to choose up

sides for a game. Captains (and they were always the same ones) took turns choosing players — descending from best to worse. The rank of school society was reinforced. I was often last. I don't ever remember anyone saying, "I hope we get to choose first so we can have Tom." It never happened.

The good news for all of God's faithful believing people is this: There is a place for us. God wants to bless us completely, fully and eternally. We don't have to worry about not fitting in, or not measuring up.

God has a place for us. Our robes are washed. We'll come through the "grinding". We will be blessed, even as we are blessed here, until that time when the tears are all wiped away and we dance around the throne at the feast of the eternal. God says, "I want "Saint (insert your name) on my team!!"

I know that in common parlance, the idea of a saint is someone who leads an exemplary life.

Today, the good news friends is that we -- that's right we —the mourning, the selfish, the greedy the doubtful, occasionally unkind, impatient limping people in the daily grind that we are the saints of God. We're the best God's got. That is both horrifying and electrifying and extremely hopeful. We are it!

St. Peter once looked at the disciples and asked God, "What's your plan 'B'?" God replied, "I don't have one!"

Whether we know it or not, whether we admit it or not, we are the saints of God, right here, right now. For better or worse. That is both a magnificent invitation and an awesome responsibility. There are of course ramifications to sainthood, expectations and obligations. Today is a celebration of the deliciousness of salvation and God's total acceptance of us, just as we are, ragged and limping and very human saints, by a forgiving and totally loving and totally optimistic God. It's the Good News. It's what Jesus was telling us. It makes me smile.

Amen.