

November 4, 2007    Our Hope in the “Day of the Lord”    All Saints Day  
Houghton Lake UMC                      II Peter 3:1-13

Today is a day of celebration!!

Today we celebrate eternal life and eternal hope.

Today we celebrate the promises God has made to us in the Bible about paradise, heaven, and our eternal reward. We celebrate the fact that for the Christian, death is our true birth day, our graduation into eternal life—the very day we set aside our faith and realize our destiny. Today we remember that there will come “The Day of the Lord” when all evil will be punished and the innocent will rejoice. Today we celebrate “a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” As our scripture lesson proclaims in II Peter.

Today is a very special day as we gather to remember the lives of those who have gone before us into Paradise, from the thief on the cross who heard that promise from the very lips of Jesus on Good Friday 2000 years ago—to the saint of God who died this morning and who has just now seen Jesus in glory. Some day that person will be you if Jesus tarries. Some day that person will be me and I will see my loving savior face to face.

Today we celebrate All Saints Day, as defined by Wikipedia, this day is sometimes known as **All Hallows** , **Hallowmas** or "Hallows-eve" ("hallows" meaning "[saints](#)," and "mas" meaning "[Mass](#)"), it is a feast

celebrated on [November 1](#) or on the first Sunday after [Pentecost](#) in honour of all the saints, known and unknown. It was a day honoring the martyrs of the church as early as the third century and today we continue this tradition as we honor the saints of our own generation.

All Saints Day is very important because we talk about life and death and eternal life. It is a day we talk about our own mortality and our faith in Jesus who has promised to give us resurrection, immortality and eternal life. All Saints Day is an opportunity for us to share our faith with each other and to express our deepest hope and our most intimate trust...that is that Jesus the resurrected one will keep his promise and give us this eternal life if we remain faithful to him to the end of our life.

We celebrate not only those saints we read about in the bible who become witnesses of God's grace for all who will read the scriptures and follow their example. We also celebrate the lives of the martyrs of the last 2000 years whose witness and blood became the seeds of the church. Who faced the evil of their day and stood steadfast in their faith even though it meant a cruel and painful death. These are truly the heroes in the battle between good and evil.

So today we remember church history and the millions of people who gave their lives to share the gospel with the world. All Saints Day is the

Memorial Day of the church. We read books like “Fox’s book of Martyrs” by John Foxe, that English classic written from 1516-1587 that contain accounts of the deaths of Christians from the first century of the church through the protestant martyrs in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By reading this book we are reminded that we have lived lives of privilege in America at this time, the turn of the 21 century. And then we read the magazine “The voice of the Martyrs” published today and realize that around the world people are giving their lives for Jesus perhaps in this very hour, and we are forced to ask the question, is our faith strong enough to face that kind of persecution and pressure. Let us pray that we will never have to find out. These people, who gave their lives for Christ, we honor and remember as the heroes of our faith.

But then I think of my grandmother, who prayed for me and loved me, and when I went off to Bible College she gave my Great Grandfather’s Bible. She lived a quiet life of faith surrounded by a family who, for the most part, walked by faith as well and she was a lady who sang songs in her garden like “Revive us again” when no one was around. Or at least when she thought no one was around. Our family had arrived and she did not know it and I had snuck up on her working in the garden and heard her singing that song. Praise the Lord, she never faced a screaming mob or anything close to martyrdom,

but she stands in heaven today as a saint that helped to mold my life and my faith and the faith journeys of my generation.

We also celebrate today the lives of those who have lived righteously in our own life time, who have shared their faith with us and then went on to their eternal reward with the promises of Jesus on their hearts. We celebrate those friends and family members who lived a life of righteousness and holiness before our very eyes and demonstrated through the lives they lived the very truth and power of the gospel they proclaimed. We celebrate the fact that we live our lives with the hope of eternal life—receiving the very promises of God as a result of our faith in him. We celebrate the promise of life everlasting in a place Jesus called paradise. We celebrate our hope of something far better than this life, when we receive our resurrected bodies, described by Paul in II Corinthians as “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (II Cor. 5:1)

And when we read and study these two epistles of the Apostle Peter it isn't until we get to this passage in II Peter 3 that Peter tells us why he is writing these epistles.

Peter is also living with this hope in mind. He is practicing what he is preaching. Peter is telling us that he has written these two epistles for one reason- these epistles were written to be “reminders to stimulate us to

wholesome thinking.” Peter wants us to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through our apostles.” He is giving credence to the messages of both the Old and the New Testaments and particularly the ministry and epistles of the Apostle Paul.

And then he predicts the future with ominous words. He predicts that at the last day scoffers will come and begin asking, “Where is this ‘coming’ he promised?” Their entire intent will be to cast doubt on our faith and hope. They will tell us that our hope of Christ’s return is futile and without merit. They will tell us that we have waited for 2000 years and nothing has happened yet, shouldn’t this prove to us that his words were a lie and our faith is a mistake? In truth, the church has heard these words every generation, but we know that “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you and me, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” This is true for every generation isn’t it. We want our children and our grandchildren to have good and fruitful lives, to live in faith and to also go to heaven with us. We certainly do not want our next-of kin to face the horrors of the end of the earth. Even though we know and hope that someday the “Day of the Lord” will come and these things will be true for someone.

For Peter tells us, as Paul before him, and Jesus before him, and the prophets before Jesus, that; “the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” Doesn’t this sound like a nuclear holocaust? Doesn’t this sound like the end of the world we have all grown up fearing, one day from the Russians, today from some radical Muslim trying to destroy Israel and America? Doesn’t this sound like the results of the end of World War III when every nuclear warhead is sent into the sky because the deterrent we all know as MAD (the military doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction) has failed? The day of the Lord will be a day of joy for the Christian but a day of horror for those who have no hope. It is a day that we believe we will escape because the rapture will come and we will be spared the horrors of Armageddon and the end of the world as we know it.

Every Christian, whether they lived in Jesus’ day or were born yesterday will see “The Day of the Lord”. The Day of the Lord was first described in Malachi 4:5 “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.” This was the verse that the Jews were referring too when Jesus was on the Cross and they waited to see if Elijah would come. (Mark 15:36) It is also described by the Apostle Paul in I Cor. 5:5 “hand this man over to Satan, (Paul writes) so that the sinful nature

may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.” In II Cor. 1:14, Paul also writes, “as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.” And again in the first letter to the Thessalonians 5:2 Paul writes, “for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” And in our text today in verse 10, Peter adds to our knowledge of that day when he writes; “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

This is what we celebrate on All Saints Day—the lives of those who walked by faith before us and gave to us this precious gospel we have in our hearts, and the day when Jesus will be revealed to the world as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the very Son of God, who will return to the earth in triumph just as the disciples had seen him leave the earth on the day of his ascension.

All Saints Day celebrates our hope “that when the roll is called up yonder I’ll be there!” All Saints Day celebrates that “when the saints go marching in, Oh when the saints go marching in, O Lord I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.” All Saints Day celebrates, “when we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be, when we all see Jesus,

and shout, my friends, the victory.” All Saints Day is about going to heaven. It is about receiving our reward. It is about obtaining the crown of righteousness the Apostle Paul talked about in his second letter to Timothy 4:8 when he said, “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

Is that you my friends? Are you a person of hope in God’s glory? Have you surrendered your life to the call of the gospel, repented of your sins, and put your whole future into God’s redeeming grace? Have you accepted Jesus as your savior, conformed your life to his will, and seek this place called heaven as your eternal resting place? Today is the day of salvation, my friends. Today you can have this eternal hope for yourself if you accept Jesus as your savior, repent of your sin, and ask Jesus to come into your heart and from this day forward walk by faith. That is what we talk about when we say that there is Victory in Jesus. He can free us from sin and the things that bind us and give us a better life in this world. But the real victory comes when this life is over and we meet our savior face to face in Paradise and know we have received our eternal reward.

Let us pray.

Thank you for All Saints Day! Thank you Lord for those who gave us this great hope, who lived lives of righteousness and faith, and who passed down this great truth from generation to generation. Thank you, Lord that 2000 years later we know the truth of your gospel and we have the opportunity to not only receive this truth for ourselves but to share it with our children, our grandchildren and every person we know in this generation. Give us the boldness to share our faith with the whole world. And today if there is anyone in this room who does not have a personal relationship with you, Lord I pray that you will speak to their hearts today and turn their lives around in hope and new life. Thank you Lord for all you do. Amen and Amen

Let's celebrate our faith in Jesus as we sing

Victory in Jesus (When we all get to heaven)