



ALL SAINTS' SUNDAY

7 November 2004

Daniel 7:1-3

Psalm 149

Ephesians 1:11-23

Luke 6:20-31

Saint Paul, Saint Peter; Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Saint Mary, Mother of Our Lord; Saint Mary Magdalene, friend of Our Lord; Saints Mary and Martha, Agatha and Elizabeth. And all the Saints who from their labors rest, whose earthly remains lie outside in the columbarium: Saint Alice West, Saint Richard McKennett, Saint Jean Eman, Saint Rose Weber, Saint Robert Trenka, Saint Darryl Loewen, Saint James Rapp. And all our beloved dead, Saints Nan and Carol; Saint Frieda and Saint Sam; Saint Patrick and Saint Christine; Dad, Gramma, and Aunt Lydia—Saints, every one of them. Then too, the living and the lively ones: Saint Dorothy, Saint Richard, Saint Soren, Saint Breanna, Saint Amanda, and yes, even little Saint Christopher. Those in back of you, all of them Saints—and those in front and those on either side each of them a Saint as well. All of you—and even me—Saints of God.

So what is it to be a Saint? The English word *saint* is a translation of the Latin word *sanctus* which means *holy*. This Latin word for *holy* is a translation of the Greek word *hagios*—so in Latin and Greek, the Saints are known as *Holy Peter and Paul*, *Holy Mary*, *Holy Wisdom*, *Holy Hannah* and *Holy James*. Saints are *holy ones*. In Hebrew that which is *holy* is *kadosh*. Isaiah tells how the angels who surround the throne of God continually do sing, *Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh, Adonai ts'va-ot*—Holy, holy, holy, Lord of Hosts.

But the word *holy*, what then of it? *Silent* nights are holy, the lowly infant is holy, the Ghost is holy, and the Trinity as well. *Kadosh* in the Hebrew scriptures, *holy*, yes—but more precisely meaning – *set apart*, *Other*, *eccentric*, *peculiar*, *different*, *odd*. The God of the Hebrews is the God who is *peculiar and eccentric*. The God of the Hebrews is different from other gods. How *odd* of God to choose the Jews. Odd, odd, odd is the Lord or Hosts. Silent night, odd night. Infant lowly, infant . . . odd. The Odd Trinity. (No kidding.)

Indeed, how odd of God to become one like us, to become one liking us. How odd of God to be born in a stable—and then those *different* shepherds. How odd of God to forgive those who put him to death in the most humiliating way possible—terribly eccentric of God to be executed as a revolutionary, a threat to the state, a threat to good religious order. What an odd God who would rather die as a criminal than be known as a God of vengeance, who would rather die and save a murderer than not turn the other cheek.

And then the odd God declares God's people themselves *set apart*, *Other*, *eccentric*, *peculiar*, *different*, and *odd* as well—a thoroughly Odd Spirit, singing out in words beyond all words while dancing on the heads of eleven thoroughly different Galileans. And then to choose Odd Paul, an angry murderer of the Eccentric Church.

The Saints, the Holy Ones of God, the Odd Ones of God—born of a fallen humanity, of a humanity turned in on self, but reborn in the waters of baptism—proclaimed by God to be, in God's sight, like Christ, the Odd Son of God. The baptized—no longer regular, everyday, usual, run of the mill people—God said, *let them be Odd*, and they were . . . Odd. What God says, IS. The Holy Ones of God, the Eccentric, different, Other, set apart people of God.

The Odd Son of God says to the odd, set-apart people of God: Love your enemies. Do good to those who

hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. This, says the Eccentric One from God, is who you are, Odd people of God—you are as I AM: If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other one also—as I have. And from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even the very shirt off your back. Give to everyone who begs of you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. The Odd Son of God who stands outside of time says this is who you already are, this is who you yet shall be. Day by day you are being transformed into who you are in Christ—a Saint—one of God's odd, eccentric, different ones. How odd to congratulate those newly elected ones for whom you did not vote. How eccentric to bless those whose politics frighten you and to pray for those whom you think may threaten your way of life. How very strange to rejoice and be glad in all things—even on the day after the election. How perfectly odd to live life extravagantly giving while radically trusting that God will indeed provide us with all that we need and more.

All of that—that is you, beloved Saints of God. All of that—that is what the saints whose remains lie outside have now fully become. Oddness often hidden in this life—oddness now complete in the realm of God to come. For all the Saints who from their labors rest—and for all the Saints still struggling on—for you—thanks be to God who will—and already does—give us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ.