

Saints are Saved Sinners

As the Church of Christ prepares to celebrate the Feast for All Saints, it seems worth the while to give some thought to exactly whom it is that we celebrate.

Who are the saints, for one thing, or "the holy ones", as the word "saints" means? The Roman Catholic notion of the saints being those who were spectacularly good people is deeply rooted in common culture. This is one reason why a common feature in funerals and memorial services in many religious settings is the effort to create the impression that the deceased was a good enough person to have earned a place with God in His Kingdom.

The Church of Christ knows better, though. She knows, because Holy Scripture says so, that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God presented as an atoning sacrifice by His blood to be received by faith."

The saints are not spectacularly good people. They are sinners whom the Son of God has justified, or made righteous, or holy, that is: free from sin and guilt before God, in that He has taken upon Himself the sin of all sinners, and taken it upon Himself to suffer His own judgement against it - and in whom His Word of His love and what His love has done for sinners has been successful so that they surrendered to His love and sought their salvation in Him. Therefore Holy Scripture refers to all believers as "saints". It is not the goodness of the dead the Church celebrates; certainly not the goodness of those who would not know of Him and His goodness, but also not the goodness of those whom we perceive to have been "good Christians". What the Church celebrates is always the goodness of God, not that of the dead, or of the living, or our own. His Church worships Him, and Him alone!

As such, it is not actually the saints we celebrate on the Feast for All Saints, except in the sense that we celebrate their salvation. As we remember those who have gone before us, we rejoice that those who die in the faith shall not really die, except so as to die away from this world of sin and suffering and sorrow to be instead with God in glory, all on account of His goodness and mercy alone, and for no other reason whatsoever. And we look to the promise He Himself has given in Holy Scripture, that "neither life nor death nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Pastor Jais H. Tinglund

Grace Lutheran Church, Greybull/Zion Lutheran Church, Emblem