

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

**All Saints Day**

**November 7, 2021**

**Psalm 149:1–9 (ESV):**

**Sing to the Lord a New Song**

149 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the godly!  
2 Let Israel be glad in his Maker;  
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!  
3 Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!  
4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;  
he adorns the humble with salvation.  
5 Let the godly exult in glory;  
let them sing for joy on their beds.  
6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats  
and two-edged swords in their hands,  
7 to execute vengeance on the nations  
and punishments on the peoples,  
8 to bind their kings with chains  
and their nobles with fetters of iron,  
9 to execute on them the judgment written!  
This is honor for all his godly ones.  
Praise the LORD!

**First Reading: Revelation 7:2–17 (ESV):**

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

5 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,  
12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,  
12,000 from the tribe of Gad,  
6 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,  
12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,  
12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,  
7 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,  
12,000 from the tribe of Levi,  
12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,  
8 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,  
12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,  
12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

### **A Great Multitude from Every Nation**

9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." 13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 "Therefore they are before the throne of God,  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.  
16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat.

17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

**EPISTLE: 1 John 3:1–3 (ESV):**

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

**THE GOSPEL - John 8:31–36 (ESV); Matthew 11:12–19 (ESV):**

**The Truth Will Set You Free**

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33 They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.

36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**Gospel: Matthew 5:1–12 (ESV):**

**The Sermon on the Mount**

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

**The Beatitudes**

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## **Sermon 45 – All Saints' Day**

### **“Kind of Love”**

#### **1 John 3:1-3**

Dear friends,

Greek has three different words for love. One for family, one for romance, one for self, to illustrate the different feel, the different direction, and the different duties that go along with the loves we have. We use the word love for a great many things, so this is familiar to us. There are many different kinds of love. Our epistle lesson is talking about a love unique to God. We can muster up something *like* it, romance and family are supposed to be echoes and reflections of it, but we can never get all the way there because of our sin. This is what I want to show you. Sometimes we have to stop and think about how strange and different God is in bad ways, but there is also the good ways that God is so very different from us. How God loves us is one of those differences. God does not love like we do. That's good, for the most part.

This is John's first letter, which means we have to remember John's style. John wants us to think about God differently. John takes the long view, he often refers to events before the world was even created. John wants us to see God as both eternal and loving and so very different than us. That's what he's going for. He wants people to see how strange all this is, who we are, who God is, and what God says, but it is a good strange. In the verses before this John has emphasized that it is all passing away, the last days are coming. On the last day Christ will appear, and when he appears we need to be ready. That starts our epistle lesson.

**“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”** What kind of love. This is a kind of love that only God can do. So what kind is it? John himself answers that question. It is the kind of love that makes us children of God. People can call you and me that without it sounding ridiculous. We're just people, trying to make it, often doing a very poor job of it too. Yet God's love makes us able to be called children of God. It changes the very essence of who we are. It changes us from sinner to saint, from evil to good, from hopeless to hopeful. We are called children of God, because of God's love, it transforms. Our love cannot do that. No matter how fiercely you love someone, you cannot change the fundamental essence of who they are. Most of you realized that when they were young, good for you, but human love is so limited. Human love cannot save people from themselves. Human compassion is a thing to admire, but it doesn't ultimately do anything meaningful. It is as empty and hollow as we are, deep down, because it is full of our sin and wrapped up in our egos. You cannot change the destiny of those you love, it is already written, and that's awful. But God, He isn't bound by those limitations. God's love has no limits. It *can* change things, it can even change us. It can turn hearts, break them, remake them, it can make us children of God when we were born children of the devil. That is God's kind of love, the kind that makes us completely new people when God gives it new every day.

This love is embodied in Jesus, who shows compassion up and down and it actually does something. It actually fixes something, it actually changes something. When Jesus walked this earth, He spoke, and demons left those afflicting them. He placed His hands on blind men, and they saw. He commanded the dead to live again, and they rose. Now that Jesus is in heaven, He carries that same authority to you and I. When Jesus tells you He forgives you all your sins, He takes that love of God that makes you new and He makes you new. When Jesus tells you He will never leave you or forsake you, He gives you the faith to ensure that those words are done just as He said they would be. When Jesus tells you He's coming back, you better believe He's coming back. He shows us this love of God that changes us.

**“The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”** How could they? Our love promises so much, but delivers so little in the end. We cannot change, we cannot alter our destiny, we cannot make the things the way we want them to be. How can we understand a God who can do all that? The world does not know God, we wouldn't either, if He hadn't made Himself known to us. He does this by showing us that love, by changing our hearts. We are not the same as those who do not believe, we may belong to the same species, we may all be human, but we are a different genus. Why? Because they are not called children of God, and they do not know what it is like to be transformed by love. All they know is human love, and what a painful, pitiful thing that is, because human love is nothing compared to God. What do we love? Idols. Family. Friends. Good times. Stuff. This world. This life. That's not what God designed for us, He designed us to be His children, and thanks to the love that changes us, He makes us His children.

**“2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”** This is why this is a challenge for us. You are the children of God right now, but show me proof. You're still you, you're still here, you're still not perfect and you're still going to age, get sick, and die. All true, but none of it changes that we are still children of God, and John points this out. We haven't appeared. What God has given you isn't visible, it isn't something you can touch with hands, it isn't a thing you can see or feel. What you've been given is a promise that all this will come to pass, what you've been given is that changing love of God that changes you and makes all this come to pass. You're just waiting to see it, and you've been waiting a long time. It's burdensome, to carry it all those years. It's frightful, thinking of how you might be waiting in vain for a train that will never come. Right now you don't see God as He is. You do see Him, many of you have said as much to me. You can see God's hands in things that happen. You can see God's work in your lives, in some of the hard times you've had, in some of the lessons you've learned. You know God is there, you know He is with you, but you don't see Him as He is. John promises you that one day this will change. One day, you will see Him, just

as He is, holy and righteous and there with you forever. This is the hope that drives us. To meet our God face-to-face and to be in His presence for eternity.

Do you see what John has done? He has linked you together, you and Jesus. You don't see yourself as you are, all you see is what's in the mirror and what's in your memories. Jesus sees you as perfect, His pure child, immortal and never failing Him or disappointing Him. Why? Because Jesus Himself is that way. He is the perfect Son of God we never could have been. He is the obedient child that none of us ever were. He labored without complaint, was persecuted without feeling the need for revenge, He is nothing like us, but instead He makes us like Him. We'll see Jesus as He is when Jesus returns, and when Jesus returns we'll see ourselves because that's who Jesus made us to be. Like Him. Pure, holy, and sinless, never dying.

**“3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”** Who is pure? Christ is pure. Because Christ is pure, you are pure, because Christ has purified you. Jesus' purity is yours, your sins are His, and that is why we hope in Him. We hope and long for the day when we can see His purity and our purity together, and John reassures us that this hope is real and does something. Our hope is based on the promises Christ gives us, and it is that hope that we greet all the awfulness of the world with. That's what I want to this end. Today is All Saints' Day, when we celebrate our honored dead and anticipate joining them. In the face of death, what hope is there? In Jesus, death is not the end, it is only the beginning of a new life. In the face of the disgrace and humiliation that comes with being a sinner and ruining things for those you love, what hope is there? If this is all I can achieve in this life, if *this* is all I can do, if I cannot make things they way they should be, what hope is there? There is hope in Jesus, who makes all things new, even our hearts, even our worst days. His purity is yours. His purposes, His goals, are yours, He makes you part of His plans even when your plans get railroaded in the process. That is the kind of love that God has shown to us. It is a love that changes hearts, it changes the whole meaning of your troubles, it changes your destiny, and it changes your fate.

Amen.