

Order of Worship for November 3, 2024

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and with you too.

Opening Hymn: “*For All the Saints*” – Hymn #677, vs. 1-3

Confessing Our Sins

P: Remember your leaders,

C: those who spoke to you the word of God.

P: Consider the outcome of their way of life,

C: and imitate their faith.

ALL: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:7-8)

P: Yet, we forget.

C: We easily getting suck into imitating those of the world, those who aim for wealth, popularity, comfort, ease—anything except You, O God.

ALL: Forgive us, Lord.

P: We are all made saints, not by our goodness, but by the blood of Christ Jesus washed away our sin by His death on the cross. In His place and by His command I forgive You all Your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

ALL: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Service of the Word p.152

Entrance Psalm:

P: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C: They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

P: In You, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame;

C: in Your righteousness deliver me.

P: For You are my rock and my fortress;

C: and for Your name’s sake You lead me and guide me.

P: Into Your hand I commit my spirit;

C: You have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

C: They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Kyrie “Lord, Have Mercy”: p. 152

Hymn of Praise (*This Is the Feast*) p. 155

Salutation: p. 156

Prayer of the Day

P: Almighty and everlasting God, You knit together Your faithful people of all times and places into one holy communion, the mystical body of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us so to follow Your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that, together with them, we may come to the unspeakable joys You have prepared for those who love You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-2, 13-16, 32-40

R: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia: p. 156

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord. (sung)

P: Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

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

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

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

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

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

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ.** (sung)

Sermon Hymn: “We Are Called to Stand Together” - Hymn #828

Sermon: “Saints Before Us” – Hebrews 11

A bit over a month ago, one of the greatest baseball players ever died. Pete Rose will likely always hold the all-time Major League Baseball record with 4,256 hits and his on-field career was one of the greatest of all time. He also holds the all-time Major League record for games played (3,562), at-bats (14,053), singles (3,215), and outs (10,328). Despite all of that, he is not, nor will he ever be in the Hall of Fame. Why? Because he broke the baseball rule that you simply cannot break, betting on baseball games while actively a player and manager, and accepted a lifetime ban as a result.

Pete Rose isn't the only one who is banned from the Hall of Fame. Here in Iowa, we're all familiar with Shoeless Joe Jackson and the rest of the Black Sox who were banned for purposely losing the 1919 World Series, because of their connection to the Field of Dreams. Sammy Sosa and Mark McGuire among others haven't made the Hall of Fame due to their use of steroids. Others may have been good players, but weren't great enough or popular enough to make the Hall of Fame.

Today's epistle reading from Hebrews 11 is sometimes referred to as the Hall of Fame of the Bible, or the Hall of Faith, because it is a collection of famous heroes from the Old Testament, giving those examples of what it means to live by faith. It focuses on Abraham and Moses, but mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Rahab, David, and more. But unlike the Baseball Hall of Fame or any other Hall of Fame, where you have to accomplish something to win stardom and earn your place among the forever famous, one's place in the Hall of Faith is not based on what you do, but rather on what is done to you and through you by God's grace. You don't need to break the single season home-run record to get into the Hall of Faith. The people listed, however, made the hall of faith despite their failings.

And that's why we need to remember them, the saints who went before us. It's one thing to look at their stories in the Old Testament, it's another to see how they're commended and

remembered in the New Testament. When we look through the Bible, we see that even the ones who we hold up as examples have doubts and struggles. Abraham, who becomes a pivotal figure in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, struggles and doubts God. He pretends that his wife is his sister to save his life; he bargains with God, but not enough to save the people of Sodom and Gomorrah; and he doubts that he will have a son in his old age, even after God promises that there will be one. King David, called a man after God's own heart, breaks almost every commandment during the Bathsheba incident, where he lies and kills in an attempt to cover up his adultery, and his other failures with his family lead to coups and rebellions and death.

It doesn't get any better in the New Testament. Of Jesus' disciples, Matthew cheats those who he collects taxes from and is a collaborator with the occupying Romans. Peter charges into situations without thinking, gets compared to Satan, and denies Jesus three times after swearing he'd never do such a thing. Thomas seems doomed to be forever remembered for his doubting. James and John spend more time arguing about who is better and which one of them should have the higher position than doing what they should. Judas becomes synonymous with betrayal. It seems more like a collection of sinners than a gathering of saints.

Even in the modern day, those we regard as saints struggle. Martin Luther struggled with his feelings of unworthiness throughout his life, and we struggle with how anti-Semitic some of his later writings are. Mother Theresa spent her life working with the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India, yet worried that she had no connection to God. The lives of those who claim to be saints in the modern day are deconstructed and demonized and put under such scrutiny that none can make the claim with much backing.

But just because people let us down, just because people fail to live up to our high expectations of them, doesn't mean that they can't be saints. St. Augustine perhaps coined it centuries ago but Oscar Wilde popularized it when he wrote: "The only difference between a saint and a sinner is that every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future."

Today is All Saint's Day, when we remember those who have gone before us in faith and are now at rest. But when we think of saints, we usually don't think of ordinary people. When we think of saints, we think of people who had great faith, who lived holy lives, who faced great obstacles and persevered. But saints aren't just like that. Saints are people who struggle with faith and life, as well. We celebrate saints today, just as we remember those in the Hall of Faith, not because what they did made them holy, but because of what Jesus did made them holy.

G.K. Chesterton, a British writer who was a convert to Catholicism, while writing about Thomas Aquinas, wrote "Every saint is a man before he is a saint; and a saint may be made of every sort or kind of man." Being a saint isn't something people do for themselves or by themselves. It's something God does for them. It's something God does for all of us, calling us to repentance and forgiving us when we confess them.

That's why we Confessional Lutherans confess under Article XXI of the Augsburg Confession, "Our churches teach that the history of saints may be set before us so that we may follow the example of their faith and good works, according to our calling."

Who is in your hall of faith? Who were the unknown, unnamed saints in your life? Maybe it's in the parents or grandparents who struggled and sacrificed to get you through school, through college, through starting out in life. Maybe it's the friend who sat with you through long, late night discussions about life and faith and helped you see God at work in your life. Maybe it's the professor who saw something in you that you didn't even see in yourself that led to a fruitful, fulfilling career. Maybe it's the example of faithfulness someone gave, just by waking up and going to church every Sunday.

It is homecoming, and that means that people have been gathering to remember their time at Iowa State, their time in Ames, and their time here at Memorial. Some of those remembrances are nostalgic, looking back at how much better things were in the old days, how many more people there were. Other remembrances are of who is gone, who isn't here. It reminds us that, like the saints before us in the hall of faith, we haven't yet received the things promised, but have seen them and greeted them from afar, that we still are strangers and exiles on earth, and will be until our life's journey ends.

We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. We know with all the saints who have looked to Christ, those who've gone before us in the faith, we see our crucified and risen Lord drawing near to meet us.

We remember the saints who went before us because they lived by faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah all lived and died by faith. So do we live "by faith." Living by faith has a double meaning. We have eternal life because faith clings to God's promises. But we also live by faith because faith is active in love and good works. Faith believes God's promises, and faith obeys God's Law.

Because Jesus died and rose again, you and I can live by faith. We shall die by faith. And someday we shall live again—forever—by faith! Your names are written in the book of life. Even though they weren't mentioned in Hebrews 11, Peter, John, James, Mary Magdalene, Paul, Barnabas, Augustine, Athanasius, Martin Luther, and many others are already enrolled in the Hall of Faith. Your names will be written there too, with the saints who went before us, if you believe in Jesus' name. God has a place for all of us in the Hall of Faith.

Creed: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy.

C: Hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry

Stewardship Message

Offering & Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God. In the communion of all Your saints gathered into the one body of Your Son, You have surrounded us with so great a cloud of witnesses that we, encouraged by their faith and strengthened by their fellowship, may run with perseverance the race that is set before us and, together with them, receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your glorious name, evermore praising You and singing:

Sanctus (*Holy, Holy, Holy*): p. 161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: Blessed are You, O Lord God King of the Universe for You have gathered into Your Kingdom those who You gave the faith to trust and love You. We thank You for the example of those who have gone on before us, pointing us to Your Son, our Savior Christ Jesus. Send Your Holy Spirit as we join with the heavenly feast before You in heaven as we receive Jesus' true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Hear us we pray in His name and as He taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer and The Words of Our Lord: p. 162

Pax Domini (*The Peace of the Lord*) and **Agnus Dei:** (*Lamb of God*) p. 163

Distribution Hymns

"Behold A Host, Arrayed in White" – **Hymn #676**

"For All the Saints" – **Hymn #677, vs. 4-6**

Song After Communion: (*Thank the Lord*) p. 164

Prayer After Communion:

P: Gracious God, our heavenly Father, You have given us a foretaste of the feast to come in the Holy Supper of Your Son's body and blood. Keep us firm in the true faith throughout our days of pilgrimage that, on the day of His coming, we may, together with all Your saints, celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Blessing: P: Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*For All the Saints*”- Hymn 677, vs. #7-8

Postlude