November Weekly Reflections

All Saints Sunday – Revelation 7:9

“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.”

John’s vision as described in the Book of Revelation describes a group of people clothed in white gathered around God’s throne, singing praises and worshiping God without ceasing. John describes them as being a “great multitude that no one could count.” It is this multitude that we celebrate each All Saints Sunday.

As Lutherans, we do not think of Saints as only those who have lived extraordinary lives for the sake of the Gospel; but we believe that all people who have died in the faith are saints. We give thanks for all the people who have gone before us, paving the way and teaching us about the goodness of God. We remember their faith and give thanks for the ways they continue to shape our lives.

Reflection Questions:

* Who is a person who has transformed your faith? Why?
* What legacy do you hope your faith will leave behind?

A Saint in My Life, Grandma - Matthew 22: 34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

I was only nine years old when my grandma died. She had been sick through most of my life, so I never knew her when she was young and strong. As I grew older, I began to realize that this meant that I had missed the opportunity to get to truly know her and I experienced a sense of loss. I began to talk with my grandfather and ask him to share stories of her so that I could get a glimpse of who she was. He would always tear up and tell me that she was truly the love of his life and that he missed her every day.

Over the years, I have learned countless stories of her strength, her wisdom, her kindness. In one story, I learned that whenever the conversation turned to speaking ill about others, she would always get up and grab a pack of playing cards and insist that they play a game so that they wouldn’t be tempted to speak ill of their neighbors. It was just one of the small ways she lived out her faith and took God’s call to love our neighbors as ourselves seriously.

Reflection Questions:

* How do you demonstrate the call to love your neighbors as yourself?
* Who is a person who has shown that love to you?

A Saint in My Life, Grandma Jackie – Acts 9:36

“Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity.”

This verse about Dorcas reminds me of my grandmother, Jackie. My grandmother has modeled the life of a saint for me. When something needs done, she is always ready to do it. When someone needs help, she is always ready to help them. I am always amazed at the way she can take charge of a situation and command a room—but always with compassion for everyone. When her husband, my grandfather, died, she tried to help serve the meal at the luncheon for his funeral—she was so used to always serving others through the kitchen in her church that she felt she ought to be doing that even then!

I imagine that to be “devoted to good works and acts of charity,” Dorcas could not have been a very passive figure. She would have been willing to make difficult decisions and equip others to help as well. She would have rarely been idle and would have always been seeking ways to do good; always listening to others; and always committed to justice. She would have been a strong woman. All of those things remind me of my grandmother and the many ways that she serves others in her church and community and models Christ’s love through the many works of her hands.

Reflection Questions:

* Is there anyone in your life who is like Dorcas?
* Who models God’s love for you?
* Are we “devoted to good works and acts of charity?” What can we do to be more like Dorcas?

Pray for those in your life who have showed you God’s love by their examples and ask God to help you model God’s love for others too!

A Saint in My Life, Grandma and Grandpa – 1 John 3:1

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.”

My grandpa Kreger died when I was very young. The story goes that I actually learned to crawl while in his hospital waiting room. Because he died while I was still very young, I did not get to know him personally. Everything I learned was through family stories. Over the years the stories that were told were only the good ones, the ones that placed my grandpa in a perfect light. While I think this is a natural thing for a family to do, to remember a deceased loved one through positive stories, my grandma feared that her husband had been placed onto a pedestal.

My grandparents had a long and loving marriage. But as all married couples know, their spouses are not perfect. All human beings are flawed. We are all sinful. And my grandma knew that her husband had not been perfect. She did not want him placed on pedestal; she did not want his flaws erased. She wanted him to be remembered for who he was. He was loving, ornery, a hard worker, stubborn, funny, a good father, could sometimes carry his jokes too far, and was prejudiced against others. He was imperfect. There were things my grandma loved about him and things she did not like.

My grandma lived for almost 30 years after her husband had died and she wanted him to be remembered as he was; imperfect…imperfect but also loved. Her true remembrance of him did not mean she did not love him. It simply meant that she could both love him and know he was flawed and sinful.

I am so grateful to my grandma for how she remembered my grandpa. She taught me that we do not have to be perfect to be perfectly loved. In many ways I feel that the way she remembered my grandpa is the embodiment of All Saints Day. On All Saints we remember those we have lost not because they were perfect but because they were perfectly loved by God. They were sinners and the love of God made them saints.

This week I encourage you to remember someone you have lost. Remember them for who they were, imperfect and flawed. I encourage you to call a family member and share stories about this loved one together. Ask your parents to tell you a story about your ancestors. Tell your children or grandchildren a story about their family. As you share stories, remember that the person does not have to be perfect to have been loved. We are all imperfect and perfectly loved by God!

Say a prayer thanking God for the grace that makes us sinners into saints.