

August 19<sup>th</sup> 2018

Scripture:

Psalm 21:1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Romans 1:1-7

“What is a saint?”

The story of the Dewitt family.

The Dewitt's lived in a small community where everybody knew everybody.

And the truth is they were not very trustworthy people.

They were unkind --- dishonest --- and thought only of themselves.

One day one of the Dewitt brothers died ----- and the eldest brother came to meet with the local pastor regarding funeral arrangements.

Older brother Steve said to the pastor if you could just say that my brother Bill was a saint --- somewhere --- somehow --- at some point in the service if you could say that Bill was a saint --- our family would be most appreciative.

The pastor sighed and said --- “Well Steve I think we all know that your brother was dishonest --- in his personal and business dealings he often cheated people a bit --- and lied.

And so to be totally honest I'm not all comfortable saying that your brother Bill was a saint.

At this point Steve reached into his pocket pulled out his cheques book and wrote a cheques to the church for \$25,000 --- please he said --- simply say -- - “Bill was a saint”.

The pastor said nothing and took the cheque ---- Steve was delighted.

The day of the funeral came and the pastor stood up delivered the sermon and began by saying --- I think it's fair to say that we all know Bill.

And I also think it's also fair to say that Bill was not a very honest man --- he often lied --- he often cheated --- and quite frankly was not a nice or trustworthy person.

Down in the front row older brother Steve was fuming.

However ---- the pastor said ---- compared to his older brother Steve --- Bill was a saint.

What does it mean to be called a saint?

What is a saint?

Often we say things like saints and sinners --- as if the two are opposites.

“I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints.” ---- Billy Joel sang in his hit song Only the Good die young --- anyone remember that one from 1977 ---- from the album the stranger.

Often the two --- sinners --- and saints --- are set up as opposites.

As though sainthood has to do with good behaviour ---- not sinning --- or not sinning much --- as if such a thing ---- not sinning --- or not sinning much even exists.

When you think of a saint ----- what comes to mind?

Think for a minute --- what comes to mind when you think of someone being recognized or called a saint?

Who are the people in your life --- you might consider a saint?

What is a saint --- who is a saint?

Well --- according to the Bible --- we are all saints.

According to the Bible we are all --- or almost all saints.

Paul uses the term saint --- translated from the Greek --- hagios ---- saint ---- 60 times.

Clearly for Paul sainthood is important --- or he would not have referenced it 60 times.

So why all this fuss about saints ----- and what does it even mean to be called a saint?

Essentially a saint is one who is called by and is following Jesus Christ.

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A saint is someone who is holy --- and holy simply means set apart by and for God.

Holy has nothing to do with the essence of the thing itself --- it has to do with being set apart by God --- and act of God.

A saint or holy one --- as hagios ---- is often translated including in the NIV translations --- means someone who has been set apart for God ---- someone who has been called and is following God's will in Jesus Christ.

So in a sense we're all saints --- we who have been called and are following Jesus Christ are all saints.

Sainthood isn't about what we have done or not done --- sainthood is not about who we are --- sainthood is about whose we are.

To be Holy is to live for God --- successfully or unsuccessfully ---- and we can debate what exactly those terms even mean --- but successfully ---- or unsuccessfully --- if we live for God we are holy --- we are saints.

Too often we tend to think that a Holy person or a saint --- a saintly person is someone who have accomplished great things ----- held back in the face of temptation --- someone who changed the world for the better in a dramatic way --- and so on.

People like ---- Mother Theresa --- Martin Luther King Jr. ----- and so on --- aren't these the kind of people --- saints --- that Paul is referring to?

And of course the answer is yes --- but he is also talking about you and me.

Your friends and my friends ---- each and every one of us who give over to God and follow His way as revealed in Jesus Christ.

In a certain sense we are all saints.

And we are all saints because it is not about us --- it is all about God --- and what He is doing --- how He is calling --- how He is leading --- how He is rebuking --- and counseling --- and calling and correcting us.

Some of the messiest of lives are led by marvelous and brilliant saints.

I was talking --- texting actually about David with someone this summer --- and we'll get to him in a second --- King David --- I was texting someone about him this summer --- and these are some the ways we described David in our conversation ---- "a man after God's heart ---- impulsive ----- brave --- - sometimes stupid ---- an adulterer --- murderer ----- confessor --- a contradiction of himself --- a child of God --- one chosen by God"--- and so on the list goes on.

David was all of these things plus more ----- impulsive ---- brave --- a man after God's heart ---- sometimes stupid --- an adulterer --- murderer ---- confessor --- warrior --- shepherd ---- David was sometimes even a contradiction of himself ---- one way one day --- and another way another day ----- David was all of these ---- and ---- David was a saint.

And David was a saint not because of his remarkable faithful --- sinless behaviour ----- because at times his life was a total mess.

David was a saint why ----- because he was called by God and he followed God's lead.

David in his best moments trusted God ---- glorified God and was all and only about God.

In so many ways I appreciate David ---- his rawness his foolishness his willingness to learn and grow after realizing he was foolish --- and so on.

But our call to worship this morning just may be David in his one of finest most God centered moments.

Listen to our call to worship from this morning again --- from --- I Chronicles 29 verses 10-13.

David blessed the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

“Praise be to you, Lord,  
 the God of our father Israel,  
 from everlasting to everlasting.  
 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
 and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
 for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
 Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
 you are exalted as head over all.  
 Wealth and honor come from you;  
 you are the ruler of all things.  
 In your hands are strength and power  
 to exalt and give strength to all.  
 Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
 and praise your glorious name.”

Prior to this great acclamation of praise David had just listed off all the things that have been collected for the building of the Temple --- the Temple that he himself wanted to build but that God said no to ----- saying instead that his son Solomon would be the one to build it.

And on and on goes the list of things they have pulled together for the temple.

This many thousands of talents of Gold --- this many thousands of talents of silver ---- this many jewels --- this much bronze and this much iron and so on.

It’s almost a kind of proud and boastful listing off of all that they have given and accumulated.

And then it all suddenly changes --- and none of what they have ---- thousands of pounds of gold --- silver --- jewels --- iron --- bronze and so on matters anymore.

Suddenly none of that matters one bit.

And suddenly it is all about --- and only about the glory of God --- God's goodness ----and greatness and power and majesty and splendour.

Listen again to 1 Chronicles 29 --- 10-13 --- this is David standing up in front of every body --- the people assembled ---- and saying ----

“Praise be to you, Lord,  
the God of our father Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting.  
Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
you are exalted as head over all.  
Wealth and honor come from you;  
you are the ruler of all things.  
In your hands are strength and power  
to exalt and give strength to all.  
Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
and praise your glorious name.”

If ever there was the definition --- the example of a heart oriented to worshipping God ---- to praising God --- to focusing on God and God alone ----- this is it.

When was the last time any of us simply stated just how great and powerful and grand and awesome God is --- without asking a single thing of Him?

When was the last time you simply praised God ----- saying things like God you're awesome and beautiful and wonderful and powerful and good and true --- and didn't conclude by asking for something.

“Praise be to you, Lord,  
the God of our father Israel,

from everlasting to everlasting.  
 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
 and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
 for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
 Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
 you are exalted as head over all.  
 Wealth and honor come from you;  
 you are the ruler of all things.  
 In your hands are strength and power  
 to exalt and give strength to all.  
 Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
 and praise your glorious name.” ---- David says.

That’s a heart of worship ---- that’s a heart oriented to God and God alone --  
 - that’s someone giving God glory ---- that’s true worship --- that’s the voice  
 of a holy one --- that’s a saint speaking there.

Giving God glory.

Not asking for something --- not accomplishing something --- not sharing  
 one’s gift ----- just giving God His due glory.

When Paul refers to holy people ---- hagios --- set apart --- saints --- like he  
 does 60 times in his letters ---- he’s talking about what David is doing right  
 here in this moment of glory.

What is a saint?

Who is a saint?

What makes a saint?

Giving glory to God makes us saints.

Following God’s will --- makes us saints.

God revealing Himself to us makes us saints.

News flash ----

It's not about us.

It's not about us.

It's not about us.

It's about God and His goodness and glory.

That's the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ today according to scripture ---- according to Paul --- and demonstrated in David's profound moment of worship.

It's not about us --- it's about God's glory.

Jesus didn't do a single thing to bring glory to Himself --- He did absolutely everything to bring glory to God and God alone --- and He is the one we follow.

What we do doesn't determine who we are ----- whose we are determines what we do.

What we do doesn't determine who we are ----- whose we are determines what we do.

God loves us --- God has chosen us.

We are all children of God --- that's what matters --- that's why we are holy --- that's why we are saints --- because God has chosen us and called us children of God.

We need to claim that identity --- our identity as children of God.

When we do this --- claim our identity in Christ ----- the prince of darkness --- shutters --- and crawls back into his tiny little hole with his tail between his legs --- and is rendered powerless.

We are saints of the Lord as we'll sing in a minute.

“How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord” --- our closing Hymn echoes on.

Why --- all because of His majesty --- dominion and power.

Why --- all because of His goodness --- beauty --- and truth.

Why --- all because we are children of God --- all because we are children of the Risen King.

We are special -----

--- we are loved

----- we are holy

----- we are set apart

----- and we are beautiful --- and we are made well ----- we are saints.

In God's eyes we are saints.

Not because of anything we have done or left undone ----- but because of the goodness and grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

And these are not just comfy cozy little words loaded with sentimentality --- rainbows and butterflies.

They are reconciling words ---- they are redeeming words --- they are saving words --- that change the world ---- our lives ---- everything.

It is said that when the great Martin Luther was tormented by the evil one --- he would literally shout out things like ---

“I am child of God ---- justified by the blood of Christ --- saved by God in Christ at the cross of calvary ---- leave me alone --- depart from me evil one.”

We are special -----

--- we are loved

----- we are holy

----- we are set apart

----- and we are beautiful --- and we are made well ----- we are reconciled ---  
- redeemed ---- saved ---- made holy ----- saints.

And a man named Jesus did it.

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And nothing can change this.

Ruth Graham Bell ---- wife to Billy Graham once said ----  
 “A saint is one who makes it easy to follow Jesus.”

“A saint is one who makes it easy to follow Jesus.”  
 Put another way a saint is one who brings us closer to Jesus.

A saint is one who makes the distance between us and God smaller and smaller such that we are suddenly in the very presence of God Himself.

That’s what Jesus does ---- eliminates the distance between us and God --- atoning ----- at one-ing us with God --- making us one with God once again.

Making us Holy and clean and true and good once again --- saving us from the prince of darkness who takes us and tries to mess us all up.

We are children of God --- we belong to God --- we are of God ---- He is our home our father --- the place and person to which we are ultimately headed eternally.

And so --- in light of God’s goodness ---- in light of God claiming us as children of God --- in light of Christ ---- like David we too can say -----

“Praise be to you, Lord,  
 the God of our father Israel,  
 from everlasting to everlasting.  
 Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power  
 and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,  
 for everything in heaven and earth is yours.  
 Yours, Lord, is the kingdom;  
 you are exalted as head over all.  
 Wealth and honor come from you;  
 you are the ruler of all things.  
 In your hands are strength and power  
 to exalt and give strength to all.  
 Now, our God, we give you thanks,  
 and praise your glorious name.”

God is calling us to claim His love in our hearts in our lives in this world.

We are children of God.

We are children of the Risen Lord --- king of the universe.

Lord of Lord --- King of Kings --- sovereign over us.

We are saints in God's eyes.

We are the apple of God's eye.

How marvelous and wonderful is that.

It is not about us --- it is about Him.

And so we sing glory to His name.

And praise and bow down before Him and worship Him in humble adoration and submission.

God you are amazing ---- and good --- and great ----- and beautiful and true ---- and we are so blessed to be loved and forgiven and saved by you.

You are sovereign over us.

And we give thanks and stand at the foot of the cross in humble adoration.

You are ours and we are yours --- and so because of this we give you all glory ---- honour and praise --- now and forever.

That's why we're here to give God glory and honour and praise --- to thank and to worship Him.

As we give up our offerings this morning --- as the plates are passed around --- take a moment to thank God for His goodness.

We are here because of and for God's glory.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.