

Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday, November 6, 2022, Year C

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA:**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 20:27-38, Mark 12:18-27

***"All Saints"***

Today we are celebrating All Saints Sunday – and when we do – People usually question as to why do we celebrate – because “I’m certainly no saint!” And then they say, “I am not perfect and I am filled with guilt and even shame. Well, I beg to differ with you – because as a forgiven believers in Jesus Christ – there are several things that I want to remind you that:

- We have been adopted to be holy and blameless. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 1: 4-5 *“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”*
- You have been washed and brought to life by the Holy Spirit. God spoke through the Prophet Ezekiel, *“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”* (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
- Do you know that you have been sanctified, set apart by God for God and His holy purposes? Therefore you are a saint and holy by God’s grace.

So you don’t have to say those things to yourself anymore. If you know and loved Jesus Christ, and have asked for forgiveness of your sins – guess what? You are already wearing white robes and you don’t even realize it. Whiter than this – let me tell you!

And so on this celebration for All Saints Sunday – release the load off your shoulders of guilt and shame and realize that you can indeed join in the celebration – because God loves you and has forgiven you through His Son, Jesus Christ.

In today’s Holy Gospel, the Sadducees had an issue with words. You know how the Pharisees and the Sadducees were always trying to trip up Jesus, they were planting little land mines for Him to fall on, but He never fell on them! They came up to Him and posed to Jesus a complex and difficult question, and we have to take it step by step if we’re to see both what was at stake for Jesus and His opponents and what we can learn for ourselves. The Sadducees, the Jewish priestly aristocracy, didn’t believe in the resurrection. Many of you have heard me say when teaching that since they don’t believe in the Resurrection – that is So Sad You See!” Understand that is a hollow belief on their part. The Sadducees wanted to see whether Jesus agreed with the Pharisees. The Sadducees tell Jesus a story which depends on an ancient Jewish law from Deuteronomy 25:5–10 and Genesis 38:8. If a man dies married, but childless, his younger brother is commanded to marry his widow, and count the children as his brother’s, and so keeping up the family line and inheritance. In this story, which they concocted. this happens seven times to one woman. How incredibly absurd that they would come up with this idea. The Sadducees are trying to make a ridiculous point that if all come back to life – whose wife would

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she be? Jesus carefully, as if with a scalpel, surgically, puts them in their places, saying that they don't know the Scriptures or how powerful God really is.

Jesus proposes that the book of Exodus, one of those the Sadducees acknowledged as authoritative, does teach the resurrection, when it describes God as 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' The patriarchs are still 'alive to God'. Let's go a step further, for in the Gospel, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John, with Him. He goes up to the top of the mountain, and there, a cloud covers them, and Jesus is transformed before their very eyes. Transfigured, if you will, into a dazzling white – there is a glow around Him. His face changes, and there on His right and on His left are Moses and Elijah. Where did they come from if they are dead to God? **They are alive with God.** They didn't just automatically get put together, but they were in their Resurrection bodies. They were Moses – the Law, and Elijah – the Prophets, right on either side of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. You have to understand that they are live – and still alive. Heaven is not a place for dead people. It is a place for 'live' people. I know that there are people in this room who have lost loved ones. It is a bad term for me to say 'lost' because they live! If they know Jesus Christ, they live and they are the saints. Please understand that. Just as well as our loved ones, who know Jesus and love Jesus, are alive and with Him at this very moment. It means that they are alive in God's presence, awaiting their final resurrection, on the Last Day. The Sadducees denied that, while the Pharisees believed it. That was one of the things that they butted heads against.

Resurrection is not another nice description of being dead. It is the reversal of death, the gift of a new body to enjoy life in God's new world. With death our physical bodies are to be no more – not subject to decay – "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," and that is the enemy's way of denying the goodness of God's creation, meaning our bodies are temporary. I look forward to that day – I am not going to have metal in my body anymore. No more replaced joints. I know that there are people in here that have gone through that. You know, a broken hip with metal implanted. We are fun at the airport! Our resurrected bodies will be perfect. Absolutely perfect. The goodness of God's creation will be made better. I want to suggest to you that believing in the resurrection should absolutely fill us with hope for an ultimate future – in the presence of Almighty God, but it should also help us to see and value the created world that we live in – a gift from God. During our retreat on Thursday, we had quiet time and that meant you had to find a place to sit and connect with God. Some people use Scriptures, while some people just close their eyes and feel His presence. While others, and I spoke to Deacon Bob about this, he went out to the shoreline and had the opportunity to just really enjoy looking at God's creation. Those fish were talking to you. He truly, physically connected with God's creation. We have to do whatever He tells us. We need to stop talking and listen to what He wants to tell us. We should never, ever limit God's power – but instead be filled with the hope that what God has made – He will remake! In Revelation, Jesus says "*Behold, I make all things new.*" (Revelation 21:5)

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Jesus has given each one of us more than a moral makeover – but He has given us a whole new identity – a regeneration, without guilt and without shame. That is why Jesus went to the cross. There is nothing in this room, that is on your life that cannot be covered by the Blood of Jesus. Understand that, just give it to Him, and don't hold back. Don't hold on to it any longer. The Apostle Paul wrote that *“even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:5-6 ) Celebrate that Good News today – on All Saints Sunday.