

“Communion of the Saints”

Luke 20:27-38

Today is All Saints Day Sunday, the Sunday to commemorate all Christian people of every time and place. “The saints” in New Testament usage refers to Christians collectively, and it is with this biblical understanding we celebrate All Saints Sunday today –the saints in the past and the saints now, the saints in the Church Triumphant and the saints in the church here.

Today’s Gospel lesson is about resurrection. Sadducees, who were the conservative sect of Judaism, did not believe in the resurrection of the dead; and they wanted to trap Jesus to show the absurdity of his belief and teaching about resurrection.

So they told a hypothetical story of a woman who married seven brothers, all of whom died, and asked him whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Deuteronomy 25:5 says that if a man dies childless, his brother is obligated to have children with the man’s widow in order to perpetuate the man’s legacy. This woman married seven brothers, one after another, but all of them died. Whose wife would she be on the day of resurrection?

Jesus’ answer is this: on earth people marry but in eternity they do not; they are like angels and God’s children because they have risen from death.

A friend of mine had a mother, who unfairly treated her among her other siblings and emotionally abused her. After her mother died, she said, "If my mother is in heaven, I wouldn't want to go there."

Taking the words of Jesus about resurrection, I believe my friend's mother is no longer how she was – she was transformed as an angel.

As I was growing up, I was hurt and injured emotionally by the insensitivity my father exhibited, which he was not aware of. I believe that he is transformed now---was made aware of his shortcoming in parenting, was forgiven, healed and made whole – like an angel.

Maybe in the world of resurrection, people are like angelic sisters and brothers to each other rather than spouses.

To testify that people are raised from death, Jesus cited how God addressed Godself to Moses. The story is from the Exodus, one of the five books of the Torah, which, to the Sadducees, held the supreme authority of Jewish teaching.

God said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "Our God," says Jesus, "is the God of the living, not of the dead." So Abraham, Isaac and Jacob must, logically and scripturally, be alive. Since they had all died, it follows that for them to be alive to the God of the Living, they must have been in some way raised from the dead. Jesus thus showed the Sadducees a proof of resurrection from Torah itself that caught them by surprise and left them speechless, unwilling or unable to ask any more questions.

So today, we celebrate all saints –saints above and saints here, for we all have sainthood. The Scripture claims that we are God’s children and saints. When we have communion, the Lord’s Supper, we commune with Jesus, the host, and commune with saints above and saints here on earth.

The words in the prayer you hear before communion affirm the communion that takes place during the Lord’s Supper: “by your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”

This past month, we remembered three saints as the choir sang special anthems in memory of them: Barry Hoag, Rita Harder and Hans Ludwig. We have sent many saints to heaven from this congregation. I would like us to remember all the saints of this church in the past and carry on the legacies they left to us. One of many legacies Barry left to us is the ministry of hospitality. He re-started Coffee Fellowship in our church and hosted it for those who came to worship on Sundays. One of many legacies Rita left is the ministry of outreach. Rita volunteered at the Soup Kitchen in our area and helped the elderly by giving them a ride to doctor’s appointments and by doing the yard work for them. One of many legacies Hans left to us was his quiet and humble presence on Sunday mornings. He faithfully served as an usher every Sunday.

One of many legacies Dot Herrera left to us was peace-making. We have the peace pole in this worship place, her legacy of prayer for peace. One of many legacies John Herrera left is a life-long learning, studying, reading and having dialogues.

Ed Bishop, who had worked closely with Pastor Fred Smith in Couple's Club, used to tell me how he and other saints of this congregation came to purchase the current parsonage at 8 Brewster Lane. He was visiting Pastor Smith, who lived in the former parsonage, sitting in the living room when he felt cold drafts blowing in. He could see some room between pieces of wood on the floor. He said to himself that the church had to buy a new parsonage for the Smith Family. So Saint Ed Bishop and all the people in the congregation worked hard to purchase the current parsonage at 8 Brewster Lane 57 years ago.

Many saints of this congregation have gathered in the parsonage at 8 Brewster Lane for prayers, studies and meetings. Many saints have fixed and repaired the parsonage even after I moved in about three years ago.

We would like to honor all the saints of this congregation in the past and present for the purchase of the current parsonage and for their best efforts to fix and maintain it. We will take their legacies of diligent labor as we move forward into our future.

In my Stewardship letter you may have received in the mail this past week, I wrote that the strength of this congregation is the people. It was so in the past and it is so in the present. We were the church in the past; and we are the church now, serving the Living God for the Living -- in heaven and on earth. Amen.