

**Sermon Preached  
by Doug King  
November 3rd, 2002  
All Saints Sunday  
1John 3:1-3**

I have always had a bit of trouble with calling today "All Saints Sunday." Every year we remember the loved ones lost from our midst who have gone to be with God. We remember everything about them that was special, everything about them that brought joy into our lives. But I have to tell you, every year there are a few people on the list who I knew fairly well, people who I deeply loved and respected but, well I do not want to be crass about it, but I am not sure I am ready to designate them as saints.

Dictionary definitions speak of saints as persons of exceptional holiness. By its very nature I have not known too many folks which I would call exceptionally holy. So where do we stand on All Saints Sunday? Is it a "public relations" day where we claim those that have left us were really a lot more holy and pure than they actually were when they were living their every day lives here with us?

No. Of course that is not what this day is about. Our text from the Johannine letters this morning illuminates what All Saints' Sunday is about and about the reality of sainthood. The opening line is often used in our liturgy of baptism, "See what love the God has given us that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are." In baptizing infants we remember the promise given to us by God that we are claimed and loved by the divine even before we lift a finger to engage in any saintly deed. We stand strong in the belief that each and every one of us is a child of God regardless of the imperfections of the lives we lead.

The unfortunate nature of this world is that we often lose sight of the reality that all of us are children of God. The text continues, "The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him." The writer of First John reminds us of how the world was incapable of recognizing who Jesus was and what he came to bring us. And just as we

did not recognize who Jesus was, we do not recognize the true nature of each other and ourselves.

Perhaps we spend far too much time focusing upon who we are now and not nearly enough time envisioning who we will become in God's promises. The writer of First John says it this way, "what we will be has not yet been revealed." On All Saints' Sunday we seek to glimpse what "has not yet been revealed." We lovingly remember those we have lost and we celebrate all that their earthly lives meant to us. But we also celebrate where their lives have gone. We celebrate their return to God. We celebrate that this return has revealed their deepest nature, and yes their exceptional holiness, the very imprint of God placed upon them when they were created.

All Saints' Sunday is about recognizing our destination, and not just our destination in heaven but the destination that reveals who we truly are at our core. It is about a destination that reaches beyond the shortcomings and peccadilloes of this earthly life. It is about a destination that brings us into complete relationship with God, a destination that heals the broken-ness within us, that fills that vague yearning for something unnamed, that claims us and envelopes us in the very heart of God.

As we gather around the table this morning seeking a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in a scrap of bread and a sip of juice, let us also seek a foretaste of who we are destined to be. Let us look within ourselves and be reminded that we are the children of God. We are claimed by God and created by God to be holy, to be vessels from which God's love flows.

At the end of the service as we stand to sing "For all the Saints" and praise God's good work done through those who have gone before us, let us remember that we too are on the same journey. In the words of the third verse we will sing "We feebly struggle, they in glory shine." Yes, we know the struggle to be faithful. We know the litany of things we do that are less than saintly in this life, but as unbelievable as it may seem, we

too will one day "in glory shine." Verse three goes on to say "Yet all are one in thee, for all are Thine."

In the end it will not be dependent upon all of our faltering steps and wrong turns to find our way to full communion with God, to reveal what has not yet been revealed. Our course is already charted by the one who created us. Our destination is a return home to our God for we indeed are the saints. Imagine that. Amen.