**Worship Service November 5, 2023**

**Good morning, everyone! It is good to be in the house of the Lord with you all this morning!**

**Announcements:** We are still collecting items to fill shoe boxes! The RUMC Preschool is selling gift cards, if you purchase a gift card through them you get the full face value of the gift cards and the company you purchase a gift card for donates to the preschool. The gift card orders are due November 12th. Next Sunday (November 12th) Elizabeth Turner will be filling in for Pastor Kristn for the day.

**2:11 North: “Heart of Worship”**

**Lighting of the Christ Candle:** Let’s be in an attitude of prayer, as we light our Christ candle.“Light of Christ, shine on our path. Chase away all darkness. Illuminate our pathways. And lead us to the heart of God.” Amen.

**2:11 North: “You are My King”**

**Children’s Chat: Children’s Chat – All Saints’ Day**

is All Saints Sunday. What exactly is All Saints Day and why we do we celebrate it? It is not nearly as well known as the day before, All Hallows’ (Saints’) Eve, better known as Halloween, but is far more important in the life of the church. All Saints Day was a Holy Day that the founder of the United Methodist Church, John Wesley, particularly loved. It is an opportunity to give thanks for all those who have gone before us in the faith. It is a time to celebrate our history, what United Methodists call the [tradition of the church](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/theological-guidelines-tradition). From the early days of Christianity, we celebrate that Christ’s Church consists of not only all living believers but also all who have gone before us. For example, in Hebrews 12 the author encourages Christians to remember that a “great cloud of witnesses” surrounds us encouraging us, and cheering us on. On All Saints Day we remember all those who are part of the “communion of saints” we confess whenever we recite [The Apostles’ Creed](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/apostles-creed-traditional-ecumenical). Along with celebrating people like the Jesus’ disciples and the apostle Paul, we tell stories of the grandmother who took us to church every Sunday. We remember the pastor who prayed with us in the hospital and the neighbor who brought us food when we were sick. We give thanks for the youth leader who told us Jesus loved us, the kindergarten Sunday school teacher who showered us with that love, and the woman in the church who bought us groceries when we were out of work. These memories teach us how God has provided for us through the generosity and sacrifice of those who have come before us. The stories of the saints encourage us to be all God has created us to be. We think of the loving people we worship with on Sunday, and those across the world we will never meet. We give thanks for those whose lives encourage us. We remember and pray for our sisters and brothers in Christ who faithfully follow Jesus in places where being labeled a Christian puts them in harm’s way. So, let’s say an echo prayer…Almighty God, On All Saints Sunday, we give You thanks for all the saints in heaven and for those on earth, who have led us to Jesus and showed us His love. May we follow their example by telling others about Jesus with our voices and by showing them His love in our actions. In Jesus’ Name – Amen.

The baptism of Ilysa Jo Kozma and Emerie Ann Kozma took place after the children’s chat.

**Offering** Our ancestors in faith gathered together long ago to remember, to be restored, to be renewed. They shared their story, prayed together, and made an offering to God as they prepared to set out on the long journey to freedom in the Promised Land. Today ***we*** gather to remember and to pray together, to be restored and renewed, and we bring our own offerings so the ministry of God’s church will continue to participate in the saving works of God. Let us gather our gifts together and offer them to God in gratitude and praise. Would the ushers please come serve us at this time as we worship God now with our tithes and offerings. **OFFERING PRAYER:** God of all generations, as we worship today, we offer our whole selves to You, all that we have and all that we are. Like Your saints who have gone before us, we pray that You will he lp us to be bold in our mission and in our witness. May we who have been given so much give freely, ministering in Your compassion to the multitudes near and far, so that one day, we may stand amid the multitude that gathers at Your heavenly throne. We pray this in the name of our Savior and Redeemer, Christ our Lord. Amen. **Let’s sing the Doxology as we praise the Lord for our many blessings;** “Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above ye heav'nly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen” **Let’s pray as we dedicate our giving to Him…** Lord of all mercy and compassion, bless these gifts lovingly offered, those who have offered them and those who will receive them. Use us and these gifts in ministries of hope and love that reach out and touch not only those in need in our community, but also our nation and the world. In Jesus’ name, Amen. **Let us turn to the Lord in prayer…** Heavenly Father: We thank You today for calling us Your saints. In spite of our unholy lives, You look at us and see Jesus’ perfect life and sacrifice covering ours. Thank You for this grace, the grace we received when we accepted Christ as our Lord and Savior. Thank You for every Christian who has helped us on our journey and encouraged us to keep believing when we felt like giving up. Thank You for all those who taught us the faith. Thank You for those who made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to ensure others could hear of Your love in Christ. We remember the saints in heaven. We especially remember those from our community loved and dear to us who have passed away in the past year*.* Give comfort to all those who grieve over loved ones no longer with us on earth. Give them the hope only Your Word can offer us. We pray for Your church on earth, that it may remain faithful to the apostles' teaching and that it will strive for unity. We pray for all Christians, especially those under persecution, that they may imitate the martyrs in bold witness to the gospel. We pray for those who are not yet part of Your church and for those who have left it, asking Your spirit to convict them of Your love for them in Jesus. And we pray for the enemies of the church, and those who curse Your saints. Bring peace to those nations in conflict and where there is political instability. Protect those who are poor and hungry and give them hope. Move those with plenty to share with those who have little. Help all people to love their neighbour as themselves. God of life, we give thanks for the love You have shown to the world through all Your saints, and we celebrate our continuing communion with them whenever we worship. We look forward to being part of the crowd around Your throne in heaven. In the meantime, keep us looking to Jesus and help us witness to Him, living the holy lives You have called us to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. **We ask this in the Holy name of the One who taught us to pray:** “Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Pastor**: We remember those from our congregation who have joined the Church Triumphant in the past year. We read their names to celebrate their lives on earth, and now in heaven, as we light a candle in their memory.

*After each name is read, the congregation responds:*

***Thank You, Lord, for this, Your servant***

**The Naming of the Saints**:

Sally Schwab – 11/24/22

Joanne Forrer – 12/2/22

Norma Mead – 12/4/22

Eleanor Yoss – 10/1/23

Marcy Taylor – 10/6/23

We also remember those lost to us in the last twelve months who were not members of this church but were dearly loved by our members and their families. If you have a loved one you wish to remember, please raise your hand and when recognized, announce their name so we may light a candle in their memory. After each name is lifted up, would the congregation please respond:

***Thank You, Lord, for this, Your servant***

”**Hymn of Preparation: “For All the Saints”** **Scripture**:! Corinthians 15: 12-22 & 15: 51-57

**All Saints Prayer:** Living God, God of all saints, in whom there is no shadow or change, we thank You for the gift of life eternal, and for all those who, having served You well, now rest from their labors.

Today we especially remember the saints from among this congregation, those dear souls most precious to us, who have departed our company over the past year. We thank You for their faithful witness, for their courage amidst strife and their hope in the face of death.

We remember so many other saints who have walked this road with us,

whom we name in our hearts before You now. Continue to inspire us by their faithful witness, that we too might join in bringing Your love, justice, mercy, and peace to our world. Give us grace to follow the example of their steadfastness and faithfulness, to Your honor and glory.

All-loving God, we thank You for the communion of saints through which we are mysteriously united in Christ with those who have walked before us and with us in the faith.  We are grateful for the way they have shared their lives, struggles, faith, courage and acts of mercy during their lifetimes so that we might today live better lifetimes of joyful service to You in Your kingdom. With them we pray in one accord, “Thy Kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We make this prayer to You, God of all nations, who calls us each to Yourself that we might aspire to holiness and service in concert with the work of the saints of the ages.  To You be all glory, praise and honor now for all time to come. **AMEN**.

**Message “*Learning the Way of Faith: The Victory of Faith*”:** Would you pray with me?

Speak Lord through these lips, however unworthy, the wonderful words of life. Open our minds and hearts to Your message so that we may be transformed. – Amen

Today we conclude our October sermon series on learning the way of faith. We looked first at the trial of faith, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obeyed God’s unexpected command because he had a history and a relationship with God; he knew God to be good and trustworthy, therefore he faithfully trusted God’s promises as he obediently and unquestioningly followed His commands. Abraham’s trial of faith is a story about obedience to God. Then we looked at the discipline of faith. As a loving parent, God not only blesses His children, He disciplines us as well, for our own good. His discipline is a response of His love for us and His desire for each of us to be holy, just as He is holy. The result of His discipline is a stronger faith and a renewed relationship with Him. We looked next at the patience of faith, and we looked to Job. Job’s perseverance, his patience, stands out because his story is extreme in the amount of suffering he endured. Yet Job never lost his faith in God, even under the most heartbreaking circumstances. In his letter to Christians under persecution, James used Job as a prime example of the patience of faith in suffering. Just as Job faced many struggles, they too would face hardship in living for God, as do we. The true test of patience comes when we, like Job, we have done nothing to deserve the suffering we face. Patience reveals our faith in God’s purpose, His timing, omnipotence and love.

Job’s experience teaches us that we many never know the specific reason for our suffering in this lifetime, but we still continue to trust in our sovereign, holy and righteous God. Our responsibility to God is to love Him, obey Him, and trust Him, in all circumstances. When we do, we will find God in the midst of our trials. And He will get us through them.

Last week we looked at the courage of faith and at Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen followed the example of his Lord, Jesus Christ. He was a bold evangelist who was not afraid to preach the gospel despite dangerous opposition. His courage came from the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that lives inside each one of us. His influence was even stronger after his death, for his death had the unexpected consequence of forcing Christians to flee persecution in Jerusalem, thereby spreading the gospel spread far and wide as a result and revealing that, even in tragedy, our God “works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Stephen’s life and death is an example of how we as believers should strive to live: courageously committed to the Lord even in the face of death; faithful to preach the gospel boldly; knowledgeable of God’s truth; and willing to be used by God for His plan and purpose, no matter the outcome.

Today we will look at the victory, or rewards, of faith as described by the apostle Peter. Before we turn to his letter, however, let’s look for a moment at the great faith chapter of the Bible – Hebrews 11.

The chapter opens with a definition of faith in verse one – “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” For believers, faith is knowing the reality of things for which we can only hope for now.

For believers, faith leads to certainty of things not yet seen; faith is the certainty that they will be seen. In fact, the writer of Hebrews tells us that “without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

The author then relates the faith journey of a number of Old Testaments greats, commonly referred to today as “the heroes of faith,” whose lives demonstrated faith in action – people who heard God’s promises and believed them in spite of waiting a very long time and, in many cases, the endurance of great trials, to see God’s promises fulfilled. In some cases, these heroes of faith believed in the promises God made to them even though they never saw these promises fulfilled in their lifetimes.

We hear the stories of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. The stories of the Israelites at the Red Sea, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets among others. Though they were far from perfect, but God chooses to remember their faith rather than their sins; “this is what the ancients were commended for.”

Let’s now turn to our passage from Peter’s first letter. This passage is all about the victory of faith – the rewards of genuine faith. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

First, Peter’s words offer joy and hope in times of trouble and he bases his confidence on what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We are called into a living hope of eternal life. Our hope is not only for our future in heaven; eternal life begins here and now, on earth in the present, when we put our trust Christ and join God’s family. There are four rewards of genuine faith listed this passage, and these rewards of faith are present realities. We don’t have to wait for them. They begin in this life and extend all the way into eternity.

When we say faith, we are saying we believe that the Bible is true and what it says about Christ is true. He is the only way to salvation. He is preparing a place for us in heaven; this life is not all there is. Faith has the ability and strength to see past all the pain and suffering in this life, and to hold onto eternity. With faith, we can see the unseen. The first reward or victory of faith is that faith provides the channel for God’s protective power. “This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”Faith in God is a life-saving power. It’s not a feeling – it’s belief in the power of God to save us and change our life completely. Here on earth, we Christians are in hostile territory, under attack from Satan and the world. If we try to do battle on our own strength, without faith in God, we will be quickly defeated and fall into despairing hopelessness. But if we have faith in God and the power of His Word, we know we don’t have to fight on our own strength. We know that God will show Himself strong on our behalf and victory will be ours. For God shields us and keeps us by His power.

Is there any power greater than God’s? Think of the powers on this earth that we sometimes fear or feel we are at the mercy of: acts of nature like tornadoes, wild fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes; governments, authorities and agencies, accidents and ill health, diseases and viruses, the economy and unemployment, the actions and bad choices of other people. These powers or forces only have power because God allows them to have power – and that same power, God’s power, guards us. What does God’s power guard in our lives? In verse 5 Peter tells us that God guards us unto salvation – He guards those who’ve trusted in Christ as Savior to be sure that NOTHING keeps them from receiving salvation.

There are many things that can touch us in this life – sorrow, difficulty, hunger, loss, physical pain, poverty. And sometimes it takes a while for faith to do its work so we remember that God hasn’t abandoned us during those difficult and painful times. He is always with us, His power guarding and protecting us, so that while some things can touch us and our loved ones in this life, nothing can touch our eternal destiny, because God is on guard; we are protected by our heavenly Father who will walk us straight into eternity with Him.

The second reward or victory of faith is genuine faith proves its own worth through trials. It is through trials that what we really believe about God rises to the surface. “In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Peter mentions trials and suffering several times in this letter. We must accept trials as part of the refining process that burns away our impurities and prepares us to meet Christ. Our trials, struggles and persecutions, refine and strengthen our faith, making us useful to God. Instead of asking “Why me?” we should respond with 1) confidence that God knows, plans and directs our lives for the good, leading us toward a better future; 2) perseverance - when facing grief, anger, sorrow and pain; it’s okay to express our emotions, but not to give into bitterness and despair; 3) courage because with Jesus as our Brother and Savior, we need not fear anything. He who suffered and died for us will not abandon us. Jesus carries us through everything.

Verse 6 tells us that our trials are “for a little while,” they are temporary – trials for believers cannot and will not last forever. Even burdens that we bear through the whole of this earthly life are temporary when compared to eternity.

Trials are also of “all kinds,” coming in all shapes and sizes. Today’s trial may be a health issue and tomorrow’s trial may be a financial one. Verse 7 tells us that they come for a reason, to prove the genuineness of our faith so that the ultimate outcome will result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. As we are refined through the trials of faith, our impurities rise to the service and our Lord skims them off so that our purer faith will shine to His praise.

The third reward or victory of faith promotes genuine love for the Savior. “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.” Most of the readers of Peter’s letter hadn’t had the benefit of seeing Christ firsthand, but they loved Him! How could that happen? They saw Jesus through the eyes of faith, even as we do.

Even though, like us, they didn’t see or know Christ in their present, faith provided the way for them to experience Him and love Him, which brought “inexpressible and glorious joy,” just as it does for believers today. That is the third reward of faith – it enables us to sincerely love a Savior we haven’t seen. Without faith, it would not be possible to love Christ.

The fourth reward or victory of faith promises the salvation of our souls. “For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” The primary goal of faith is to be the channel of God’s saving power in our lives. Verse 9 says that the end result, or goal, of our faith is the salvation of our souls.

God could have chosen other ways as the means to eternal life. But He chose to make the payment for our sins Himself on the cross. He simply states, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

All we need to do is empty ourselves of any thoughts of our own goodness and merit and any thoughts we may have about earning our own way to heaven, and instead reach out in faith to the amazing gift God has given us and receive His Son Jesus as our own Lord and Savior. Those who come to God with nothing to offer but their trust in Jesus to save them are given everything! “In His great mercy God has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” Our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, an inheritance that won’t die or fade away.

There are countless miracles throughout the Bible that God performed through and for the heroes of faith. And yet the greatest miracle, the greatest reward, the greatest victory of all is the miracle of salvation that the God of Love performed in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, and the miracles of new life and transformation He performs in each person who believes in Him.

Have you made your reservations in heaven yet?

Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?

Are you enjoying the rewards, the victories, of a genuine faith – the salvation of your soul? **Would you pray with me?**  Gracious and Loving God,

Thank you for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ, the only way to salvation and eternal life, and for the gift of faith, so that we may receive Him and restore relationship with You.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen. Our **closing song** is **“Because He Lives”**

**Benediction** Go on your way rejoicing, surrounded as you are by such a great cloud of witnesses! Take courage as you face each new challenge and comfort when you pick yourself from a fall. In whatever good you choose to do,

precede it with hope, accompany it with prayer, and follow it with thanksgiving.

The blessing of God Most Wonderful, whom the saints have trusted as

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, will be with you now and ever more. *Amen!*