



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY August 25 & BEYOND”

“Will I be going to heaven?”



Don't tell me you've never asked that question before! You may have all the assurance of faith, all the confidence in the promises of God, all the hope in the Jesus who is the author and the perfecter of your Faith, all the ability in your spirit to know the difference between the foundation of the earth (which seems solid until the next earthquake hits) and the cornerstone of all creation, the foundation of the kingdom of God, namely, Jesus Christ himself. Yet despite that you still....and still have had moments of doubt and worry and lack of trust and rejection and personal betrayal (yours from others and yours toward others) that has brought that question into your mind, if only for a moment of personal pain. Or several seasons of a wandering soul.

The Sunday bible readings at All Saints' Church for August 25, will not sound reassuring in that regard. And with that question running through our heads and hearts like the old “ticker tape” reporting the current status of our futures, we are not left off the hook of seeing our own hand in our own feared demolition. That is to say, we won't be able to blame God if in fact we don't get to heaven. We have readings from the Prophet Isaiah to hear this week, and from the Letter to the Hebrews, both of which have plenty of passages within them that speak not of the terrors of separation from God, but from the mercies of God providing a way to get there! But, really, how do we find comfort, if we do not know DIS-comfort?!

And lest you were waiting for the Gospel reading – the Good News from Jesus - to provide a safe haven from the fear of that question of entrance into heaven after the readings from Isaiah and Hebrews (as I mentioned in my sermon last Sunday) while shifting uncomfortably in our pew seats, the words of Jesus do not, in fact, let us off the hook.

So why would I want to go to Church to hear all that, and have that question of entrance into heaven be even deepened?? Because there is an answer and it is good news.

Like the people on Pentecost after hearing Peter preach, “all that” produces a question within our hearts that gets pointed in the correct direction. The question on Pentecost was, after being convicted of being complicit in the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, “What then shall we do?” The incorrect direction is back into ourselves. Why? Because it was not you nor I or anyone before us who – by their power alone – created heaven and earth in the first place! As a result, it is not you or I who can provide salvation! So, the correct direction is back toward the One who made all things, and through whom all things were made, God the Father through Jesus Christ, and through whom we have an entrance into heaven.

The form of the question in Sunday’s Good News reading is good news then, at the least, because it is offered in the correct direction. And immediately upon hearing it read aloud it becomes the expression of the deepest concern of our hearts as well. Now we are highly expectant of the words of Jesus to the man, and to us. The man said to Jesus, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” (You know how you ask a question about somebody else, but it’s really about yourself.)

So where is the Good News? Jesus will answer the man by saying, “Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.”

There are a few things that Jesus says here and will go on to say more of, that bring us to the Truth of us and heaven. One of those is that there is a lie out there – maybe in you right now - that we just need to live a good life, and that the difference between going and not going is dependent on how much good stuff we do or don’t do. Very dangerous lie. It’s not about not doing good, because we are in fact commanded to do good. The problem is thinking that I can get myself into heaven (or fail to) based on my own striving in my own work. The good news? It’s not about your ability or strength or savvy or self-qualification. You are not off the hook, and that is actually good news.

In the same sentence, though, is the good news that there IS a key to getting into heaven, and it is through Jesus Christ himself. In his answer (and all of his other teaching beyond this teaching) he says “I tell you.” This comes right in between his saying that there is a door, and that entrance is possible.

“I tell you” are the words from the one who is God -With- Us, that is, God has come to us because he wants us to get through that door! As the Psalmist said, “...because we know that God is on our side.” And as St Paul said in Romans 8, “If God is for

us, who can be against us?” Jesus, saying essentially, “Here I am” and “Turn to me for the answer to your question”, this Jesus is the door and the entrance into heaven. Be in awe and trembling regarding the judgement of God, and turn that awe and trembling into trust toward your salvation and guide, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, risen from the dead, victor over life’s and heaven’s closed doors.

Yes, you may still have your moments of doubt. That’s because in this world, lies are rampant. Stand strong in your trust in Jesus Christ. And if you ever see the door shut before you, and you have believed in Him, then rebuke the illusion, and walk confidently with the Lord knowing the door is open.

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 28:14-22 Psalm 46 Hebrews 12:18-19,22-29 Luke 13:22-30

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

8:30a Low Mass (Church)
10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)
AA Meeting
7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue*—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary’s Chapel)

FRIDAY AA Meetings
8:00p Ladies’ Group (Fireside Room)
8:15p Men’s Group (Parish Hall)

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8:00am Low Mass
10:30am Solemn Mass
AA Meeting
7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)