

Sermon 5 *Thanksgiving* 2018

Dear friends in Christ as always, I speak to you in the name of the one who is our hope and salvation Jesus the Christ Amen.

So today is where we celebrate All Saints'. We call it All Saints' Sunday All Saints' Day is actually November 1st and then All the Souls is November 2nd which basically covers everybody. Saints is a word that actually comes from the Latin *sancta* and it really means whole. We celebrate in those people that we call saints; people who are whole, whole with God, and whole in the light of the spirit. That's what that means whole and Holy have the same roots. Sancta, holy, whole is the way it goes.

I love the readings for All Saints'. I really love that first reading we had about God's heavenly banquet and the sense that there will be joy and banqueting. I do like to eat. I do like wine and I have a wine cellar. I even have on my fridge that *wine is a sure sign of God's love for us* is one of my stickers.

But the wine we're talking about here is the wine of life. The wine of life not the wine of the grapes; the wine of life that lifts us and raises us always into new life. In these last few weeks from Thanksgiving Day to now we've been thinking about ourselves in our stewardship sense which is how we live as disciples. Stewards and disciples is the same world, with all the things that God has given us. We looked at a number of themes we change that word Thanksgiving to ThanksLiving like Thanksgiving is just sitting back and saying thanks, thanks, thanks and Canadians are good at that. **But it's then what we do with it, what we do with the things we have, what we do with all that we are. That's the ThanksLiving part. We looked at ThanksLiving as an attitude, a choice that we make. You can live in thankfulness. You can live in ThanksLiving. Or you can live in scarcity and fear you choose how you will live. Then another week, we looked at Thanksgiving as a way of pilgrimage, stepping out with who we are. Trusting and moving forward. Then another one, we looked at ThanksLiving in the deepest, darkest things of our life. In sorrow and suffering and how do we hold ThanksLiving even there. Or where we have to give up things that we don't want to give up, or when we have to make choices that are life giving choices: giving up that great job across the continent because it's better for the family to stay here; those types of things where there's death but yet life.**

ThanksLiving. Today I want to talk about the hardest thing of all. Last week, we actually talked about ThanksLiving with our stuff. That's hard to do for those of us in the first world because we have a lot of stuff. I actually disclosed some of the things that are in my closet which is quite amazing: I have 12 clergy shirts and I can't wear 12 clergy shirts at once. I have all sorts of suits and jackets. I can't wear them all at once. I actually have two tuxes. How many of you have that? Because in another life, I'm a musician and I play and I actually wear those things. **But we have so much stuff. It's not the stuff, it's what we do with it we reminded ourselves. They're gifts from God to be utilized. If our stuff owns us, we're in trouble. If our stuff owns us,**

we've lost the way. If our stuff dictates what we're going to do and all we're worried about is losing it, we don't have hope, we don't have ThanksLiving. Which brings us to today where ThanksLiving is all about death. What? Did he say that? Isn't the church about life resurrection and hope? Well there's an old thing from the orthodox Holy Week liturgy that says, "The kingdom of God is for none but the truly dead".

To have a resurrection and life, you have to know death. Not the way most people think of death as annihilation. Christians have no room for that thinking. Death is not annihilation. That makes it too much about this life and who I am and what I own. But it is a passage from life to life, in the fullness of the continuity of the continuum of God's cosmic loving grace. We actually celebrate in this day, on All Saints', those who get that. We celebrate it with baptism, which is about death and resurrection. Now we have the story of Lazarus today. He wasn't resurrected he was resuscitated. The poor guy was all bound up. Martha said he's going to be stinking and rotting. You don't want to open that. We know what death smells like. We have death all the time. We know what it smells like. You can see her going because it's not a nice smell. But that's not what is about. This metaphor is about where God is where, Jesus is, where that fullness is. There is always life. But this is resuscitation. Poor Lazarus is still bound up. It's almost comic if you read the thing. It's a story. You can take it literally if you want, but it's a metaphor for a real truth. If the stone is a rolled away and then Jesus says, "Lazarus come out" but he's all bound up, hand and foot so it says. But somehow he comes out so does he float out? You see that in some Hollywood movies. Or did he sort of hop like a kid in the sack race? He's bound. The most important words here are *unbind him*. Let him live, he is not dead. The sad thing is Lazarus had to go through that death again.

So death is not bad. It sometimes is the thing where we let go so that we can live more into God and that's what baptism is all about. It's also about where we are in our church in a transforming society. We have to let go of many things. We can't look backwards. Our bishop reminded us at Synod yesterday that if we are bound by our past, we won't move into our future. God is doing new things, new wine into new wineskins and the Gospel stays the same, which is about holy hope and life and salvation and the gift of God's love, has to be reinterpreted in each day, each age, each time. We're in a reformation.

We're changing our thinking. The whole world is changing around us. Things in our society are changing. We have to respond to those. So all of those things come into our ThanksLiving. They come into these baptisms of what we're doing with these four children: bringing them into a community of God's love where they can work out all of those issues, work out their giftedness and live fully into God.

I think I told you before, I have a cartoon in my office. I want to put it on a bulletin cover and this woman was so dismayed at me she just yelled at me for doing it. But in this cartoon it's a priest and the parents and they're at the font, a big old font like that one that we don't use today, and they're looking inside they've lost the baby in

the water. And she said, "How could you put that on? The poor kid might have drowned." I said to her, "That's the point. Through water which is life giving and cleansing it is also about life to life, death to ourselves and rising to life in God in Christ. That's the point." She's livid with me so I didn't use that one again. But, the point is this: we give up ourselves, not to our peril, but to our gain. We live for the others in our lives not to our loss but to our gain, we give ourselves into the fullness of God's love not for our loss but for our gain. We give ourselves fully to these children to raise them up in a community and promise to be there and give them the giftedness that they need to grow into a full stature of Christ, not so that we lose, but so that we gain.

And so today we have a full house and lots of kids and lots of noise and it throws us off track of what we normally do and it is glorious and correct and right. We should rejoice that we have the opportunity to live for one another, to live in communities of hope, to live for all ages, and to support that in the fullness of God's message of love and reconciliation. So as we come to the end of this time of thinking about ThanksLiving, I invite you today to embrace dying to the things that you think are so important, so that others can have life. To die to the things that bind you up so that you can be free to die to the things that worry you to death, so that you can seize life. And to reach out and live for those around you. Take a moment now look around see the faces, see the little ones. I mean it. Look around. Do the Unanglican thing: see who's sitting behind you.

This is the community. This is the family of God. This is the faith. This is life. This is the way. This is what we're here to do and as long as you can look out from yourself to another, you are living into the grace of God. So that's my simple message: be whole and you become whole by not being selfish, but by living with all of your gifts for those that you live with in community and those who you reach out to and walk by in the streets and wherever you go. So I think I've made my point the kids have been really good to let me do that. We're going to move on now and take a deep breath and we're going to gather around this thought, this place of life to life and bring four more into the fullness of our community.