

“For All the Saints” by Margery Zoet Bankson



Twenty-third Sunday After Pentecost

November, 5, 2023

Text: Matthew 5:1-12

Today we celebrate all the saints who have gone before us – people who have shown us the way to be truly human – living God’s intention for human life. I say that because the root word for salvation is *salvus*, which means *wholeness or completeness*. Saints are people who were truly alive! Juicy! Compassionate and connected to something larger than themselves! Have you known any saints?

As Christians, we honor Jesus as the primary example of God’s intention for human life, but in each generation, there have been people who show us the way, guide us toward wholeness,

and make a significant contribution to being a living, breathing Body of Christ in every generation.

Although we may have grown up with a definition of what it means to be saintly as being exceptionally pious or bearing burdens without complaint, we probably need to broaden our definition to include people who exemplified *wholeness or completeness*.

The saints I would name were not super-nice people. In fact, they were often a little peculiar, unique characters who didn't quite fit the social norms. You probably know some too. Before we get too far into a description of the SAINTS you would name in your life, let's take a few minutes just to say their names into our midst: [say names aloud or whisper them in your heart]

The lectionary text for today gives us a sketchy outline of the people whom Jesus might identify as saints. According to Matthew in this version of those who were promised blessing:

- They might be mourning for the state of the world around us;
- They might be quiet or meek, yearning for justice and fairness;
- They might be merciful judges or skilled politicians who are peacemakers – and can expect to be persecuted for that;
- They might also be pure in heart, innocent of greed or guile, but suffer rejection and even false accusations.

Honestly, I don't want to be a saint if it means being slandered or persecuted. But it IS an outline of the people Jesus singled out as BEING BLESSED in the realm of God. And I

do want to belong in that company.

I suspect that Jesus understood very well the world in which he lived, and he recognized that not fitting into the power structure was likely a mark of spiritual purpose. And when I think of the people who have been saints in my life, I would have to agree. They lived out of CALL and not power over others.

According to Wikipedia, the Christian celebration of All Saints' Day stems from a belief that there is a powerful spiritual bond between the living and those in heaven. All Saints Day means giving God solemn thanks for the lives and deaths of his [saints](#), including those who are "famous or obscure." That may include individuals who have personally led one to faith, such as one's grandmother or a good friend.

From the 4th century on, [feasts](#) commemorating all [Christian martyrs](#) were held on various dates near [Easter](#) and [Pentecost](#). Scholars note that churches in the British Isles began celebrating All Saints on 1 November to coincide with or replace the Celtic festival known in Ireland and Scotland as [Samhain](#). By the 9th century, this was extended to the whole Catholic Church by [Pope Gregory IV](#).

All Saints Day was retained after the [Reformation](#) in the [liturgical calendars](#) of the [Lutheran Churches](#) and the [Anglican Church](#), and today, Protestants generally commemorate ALL Christians, living and deceased, on All Saints' Day – if they observe All Saints Day at all

Here at Seekers, we honor those who have a close connection with this congregation by adding a tile to the Memory Wall in the back stairwell and adding a description of that person to the Memory Book, which you can see in the Skylight Room after the service. It normally lives in a rack next to the Memory Wall in the back stairwell and still needs updating for those who died during the covid years when we were not worshipping

here in person.

To bring the Memory Wall up to date, we've added 7 new tiles this year:

- **Fred Taylor**, one of the founders of Seekers, who died in 2019.
- **Kenny Shaw**, beloved greeter for Circle-time downstairs, who died in 2020;
- In 2022, we celebrated the lives of four more Seekers:
 - **Ed Lipp**, Muriel's husband and staunch supporter of her long journey with Seekers;
 - **Jackie McMakin**, who started the Bokamoso career workshop;
 - **Pat Connover**, Trish's husband and a longtime Steward who helped us find this building and establish many of the practices that hold us together now;
 - **Jean Adams**, artist and teacher, who called us to early environmental awareness.
- And this year, we have only one death to commemorate:
 - **Rachel Halterman**, wife of Diane Wilkinson, who was our Treasurer as we looked to each other for the financial resources to renovate this building.

Each of these people made a significant and unique contribution to our life as a Christian community. Whenever we gather in a circle for communion, as we will again in just a few minutes, I feel the presence of those saints. Even though they are not with us in person, their spirits are here. Communion includes them as part of the mystical Body of Christ in this time and place.

As you listen to the words of consecration today, I invite you

to reach back in time to be there as Jesus says "Do this in remembrance of me." See yourself in the room as he says, "This is my body, broken for you." When I hear that, I see Jesus looking at the disciples, gathered around the table, as his future body and his way of being in the world – broken and whole, all at once. "Bless you, the broken-hearted" he says. "Bless you, who hunger for justice and peace. Bless you, the lonely, the lost and forsaken. Come. Be my body here and now."

In the same way, there are people woven into the tapestry of our lives who now live in this world through us. As we prepare ourselves to form a circle here at Seekers, if there are others who you would like to name into this circle before we celebrate communion on this ALL SAINTS DAY, let us now name them into the circle, aloud or in the silence of your heart:

[no chime, just quiet naming aloud]

Closing Prayer: O Holy One, may you continue to quicken the life of this Body of Believers, that we may truly be your presence in the world, now and in the days to come. Amen.