

Sermon Title: **Our Beloved Saints**

Bible: Revelation 21:1-6a

Where & When: All Saints' Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on November 3rd, 2019

Audience: about 34 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we remember that Jesus' resurrection overcame death. Our hope is the resurrection of the dead, and the life in the new creation with Jesus Christ. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. My Research about Halloween

How was your Halloween? Happy Halloween, right? In Korea, there is no culture of Halloween, even though now some young Korean people enjoy Halloween costumes. So, I wonder what the perspective of the United Methodist Church is about Halloween? I am somewhat surprised by what I have learned. I would like to share my poor research, as a Korean.

Did you know that Halloween began as a church holiday? The name itself shows it. Halloween means "Hallows' Eve;" in other words, "the evening of the Hallows." As we pray, "Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," the word hallows means "the holy," or "the saints." Then why "Eve," as in evening? In the ancient Jewish culture, the day begins at sunset, not at sunrise. Because of this different understanding of the day, while Halloween is October 31st, November 1st is All Saints' Day in Western Christian culture.

There are some theories as to why we celebrate this on October 31st or November 1st. One theory is that, in the eighth century, it was Pope Gregory's attempt to Christianize the pagan festival of the dead, observed by the ancient Celts. But the purpose is a yearly celebration or remembrance of the Saints.

Like Christmas and Easter, our tradition of Halloween can be a combination of Christianity, commercialism, and paganism. As commercialism is very powerful, most of us know the day of Halloween as October 31st. However, it is not easy to remember All Saints' Day as November 1st. In Korea, many Protestant churches do not observe All Saints' Day, because they want to separate from the tradition of Catholic churches. Many American churches celebrate All Saints' Day on the Sunday after November 1st, like we celebrate All Saints' Sunday today.

2. All Saints' Day in the UMC

The United Methodist Church celebrates All Saints' Day or All Saints' Sunday, because it is the tradition of the church. There are four theological guidelines in the United Methodist Church: scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. Through these four guidelines, we can know God. The book of hymns can be one of the great examples about tradition. Many hymns came from Greek, Latin, German, Scandinavian, Wesleyan, English, and North American tradition, and now we include our rich ethnic diversity: more than 70 hymns came from Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, and Native American heritages. In other words, the hymnal is an instrument that we use for today's worship that came from our spiritual heritage. The hymns will be a treasure for our next generations as well. When we sing hymns or listen to

hymns, can we feel the presence of God? (likewise, I want to use the Church Trunk or Treat as a tool to express our overflowing love and joy to the kids who live in the neighborhood in Gilroy. It was joyful! It was just fun! It was a blessing!). Like the book of hymns, All Saints' Day is another means of grace and our tradition. John Wesley, our founder of the Methodist movement, celebrated All Saints' Day. In his journal, he mentioned this as "a festival I truly love."

Then, who are the Saints in the United Methodist Church? Our denomination does not have any system to elect certain people for sainthood. We do not pray to Saints. We call people "saints" because they follow Jesus Christ. Our focus is entirely on the grace of God. In this sense, every Christian can be considered a saint. Thus, All Saints' Day is a time to remember Christians of every time and place, who lived in the grace and love of God.

3. Our Hope and Our Beloved Saints

I hope to meet our Saints. Personally, I miss my grandfather, who taught me how to fish and live with passion. Because I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I believe in the resurrection of our beloved Saints. At God's table, at the Heavenly Banquet, I hope to eat and drink together with all of our Saints.

With our hope, I would like to have a time to remember our Saints who passed away in the past year (while lighting a candle for each one, and saying "We remember [name]")

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Joel Hannon | 10/27/18 |
| Richard Bartunek | 12/01/18 |
| Andrew Love | 01/28/19 |

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Patience Walker | 03/15/19 |
| Barbara Warner | 06/30/19 |
| Randy Matheny | 08/08/19 |
| Carlos Munoz | 08/26/19 |
| Tom Kennedy | 09/26/19 |

Our families and our friends who passed away.

Now we will pray in silence. (Silence) (the gong sound after 3 minutes).

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for sending us our families, our friends, and our beloved Saints. We remember their lives and their faith in your love and grace. And thank you for calling us as your children. In Jesus' name, Amen.

References

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/ask-the-umc-what-is-the-united-methodist-churchs-view-of-halloween>

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/6356/redeeming-markhalloweenmark-by-rediscovering-allhallowtide>

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/all-saints-day-a-holy-day-john-wesley-loved>

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/ask-the-umc-do-united-methodists-believe-in-saints>

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/ask-the-umc-what-does-communion-of-saints-mean>

Preface in the United Methodist Hymnal