

Sermon Title: **All Saints' Sunday**

Bible: **Matthew 5:1-12**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on All Saints' Sunday, November 1, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we are blessed as you are with us. We are blessed as we have our awesome church. We are blessed as we have our loved ones as our Saints. In this time, please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. 2019 & 2020 Halloween

Last year, our church had trunk or treat in our church parking lot. It was the first ever trunk or treat in our church. It was really joyful. First of all, we ourselves had joy. I believed that preparing not only candies but also some school supplies would be fun. That's because our love and care for children is always inside us. Many kids and families came and enjoyed our trunk or treat. I counted more than 100 kids. Because I wanted to count the exact number of kids, I purchased a tally counter on the first day of this year. It was my new year resolution to plan our church Halloween event. I was really looking forward to our trunk or treat. However, due to COVID-19, we decided not to have a trunk or treat this year. Safety is the most important thing, but I miss our trunk or treat a lot. Yesterday was Halloween. How was it? Did you prepare some candies? Did you have as many kids for trick or treat as last year?

2. Halloween & All Saints' Day

The word “Halloween” means “the evening of Hallows.” “Hallows” means “Saints.” So, Halloween is the evening of the saints. According to the ancient Jew, the day begins with the sunset, not with the sunrise. That’s why it is in the evening.

In the Western Christian tradition, we celebrate All Saints’ Day on November 1st.

The United Methodist Church believes in saints, but in not the same way the Roman Catholics do. We remember Christians of every time and place. Every Christian can be considered a Saint, because every Christian lived faithfully, shared their faith, and has been role models for us. We also remember loved ones who passed away on this All Saints’ Day.

3. My Saint: My Grandfather!

When we read today’s Scripture, who came to your mind? Who is blessed? Who are your Saints? Whose life do you remember today, as your Saint? My saint is my grandfather. My grandfather taught me how to fish. After I came to the States, I did not have the opportunity to go fishing. But, I believe that I still know how to cast, like I learned how to ride a bike. I also learned how to eat a lot of seafood. I know how to eat some fish even with bones. My grandfather was a sincere Christian. My faith tradition came from my grandparents. He used to serve as one of the Sunday school teachers. However, at some point, he decided not to go to church anymore, even though he believed in Jesus. When he worked as a Sunday school teacher, he had some painful experiences from the church. I did not know the details. According to my grandfather, the church was hypocritical and unfair. At that time, I was not able to totally understand how he felt.

He knew that my calling was to become a pastor, because my college major was in theology. He told me to become a good pastor. Before I became a pastor, even before I started my seminary, he passed away. So, he cannot see Pastor Hwapyoung. But I believe that from heaven, he is very happy to see me who serves the church as a pastor. And he encouraged me to become a good pastor, and a better pastor.

4. The Communion with our Saints

Who are your Saints? What verse is the best description for your Saints? When I think of my grandfather, verse 6 comes to me, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” He was the one who hungered and thirsted for righteousness, even within the church. I hope and pray that he will be filled. He will be fulfilled by me, and by my pastoral service. I am serving the church, which has weaknesses, which could cause a painful experience for sincere Christians. This is my promise to my grandfather: “Grandpa, I will be a better pastor every Sunday and everyday, and I will serve the church with your righteousness and with your painful experience. Please watch me from heaven, until we meet.”

Today, we will have the Holy Communion. One of the understandings for the Holy Communion is Jesus’ heavenly banquet. This understanding is beyond our space and our time. With faith, we feast together not only with our congregation, but also with all of our saints. We all join the unending hymn together, “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might...” Until Christ comes in final victory, and until we feast at the heavenly banquet, let us follow Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as our Saints do. God will be with us, just as God was with them.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for giving us your people and your Saints in our lives. They lived faithfully, shared their faith. They loved us, and they became our lives. O Lord, until we meet together, please be with us, as you were with them. In Jesus' name. Amen.