

Sermon Title: **“Mystery: Heavenly Banquet”**

Bible: **John 6:47-58 & Revelation 21:1-7**

When: on All Saints’ Sunday, November 6th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, we are the people of remembrance, gratitude, and hope. Thank you so much for all of our saints and your holy presence. Thank you so much for your resurrection and your heavenly banquet. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. All Saints Day!

We celebrate today as All Saints’ Sunday. Technically speaking, November 1st is All Saints Day. October 31st, Halloween, comes from All Hallows’ (Saints’) Eve. Halloween is more popular than All Saints’ Day. John Wesley, our founder of the Methodist movement, celebrated All Saints’ Day. He described All Saints’ Day as “a festival I truly love.” So, many Methodist churches celebrate All Saints’ Day. Because November 1st is not always on a Sunday, many churches celebrate All Saints’ Day, or Sunday, on the first Sunday of November. Some churches already celebrated All Saints’ Sunday last Sunday, on October 30th, as it was closer to November 1st. We are thankful and joyful to celebrate All Saints’ Sunday today.

2. Tradition, and Days of the Dead.

As we are Methodists, we have the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, made up of four theological guidelines: Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason. Are Hymns in the Scripture? No, but we sing the hymns and experience God's love and joy! Is All Saints' Day in the Scripture? No, but by our tradition and our experience, we celebrate All Saints' Sunday.

This year, to celebrate All Saints' Sunday, I invited our congregation to bring some photos and reminders for our loved ones who have passed away. At first, I thought that it might be like the Mexican Culture, Days of the Dead. Days of the Dead are celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. People set up altars honoring family and friends who have passed away. Photos, personal items, and food and drink are included there.

3. Holy Communion and Saints

But when I learned about our Holy Communion, one of the two sacraments, I was surprised at the depth of its theological meanings. According to the book of "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion," there are at least six major meanings in the New Testament: Thanksgiving, Fellowship, Remembrance, Sacrifice, Action of the Holy Spirit, and eschatology. Eschatology means our theological understanding of the end of history. "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." What is our understanding of when Christ will come again?

The following is a part from our Holy Communion liturgy:

"And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn, PEOPLE: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven

and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”

We have our communion, not only with our congregation physically present here and now, but also with all the company of heaven, with our saints who have passed away.

We, the United Methodists, believe in saints, not in the same way as the Catholic Church. We do not have any system whereby people are elected to sainthood. We recognize Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as saints. We also recognize Christians of every time and place. We call people “saints” because they showed us how to follow Jesus, even though the entirety of their lives was not perfect. In this sense, every Christian can be considered a saint. You are the saints. With all of our congregation, and with all of our saints, we come to God’s table.

4. Mystery: Heavenly Banquet

The following is another part from our communion liturgy:

“By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”

The communion means a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. It is a mystery. I am still alive. I have never been to heaven. But I know the taste of heaven. Where our Lord Jesus Christ lives is heaven. Many people might not understand us. But we know how to live together with our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s because the living Jesus is in us, and we are in Jesus.

I do not know what the new heaven and the new earth look like. I have never been there yet.

But what I know is that God is making all things new. No more tears. No more death. No more mourning, no crying and no pain. There will be a heavenly banquet with our living Jesus, with our loved ones, and with all of our saints.

We do not know many things. But we know that our Lord Jesus Christ is the bread of life. So, please come to the table. There is a holy mystery in God's table. Our living Jesus wants to abide in us, just as he abided in our loved ones. Come, take, and eat! The bread of life is here!

Closing Prayer

O Lord, we give you thanks for our loved ones. They showed us your love and grace. We give you thanks for your table, and your heavenly banquet. You are the living God, and we are the people of love and hope. In Jesus' name. Amen.