

Sermon Title: **“Who Are the Saints in Your Life?”**

Bible: **Revelation 7:9-17**

When: on All Saints’ Sunday, November 5, 2023

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

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, 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. A-ha Moment from “Good Will Hunting”**

I love watching movies and TV shows. One of my favorite movies is “Good Will Hunting.” Have you watched it before? Some scenes still resonate with my mind, heart, and life. If you have not watched this movie yet, I hope that this is not a spoiler. Matt Damon was cast as twenty-year-old Will Hunting, who was a very tough kid, but he was a natural and self-taught genius. Robin Williams was cast as Sean, who was a psychologist and a counselor. Sean met Will for counseling. Actually, Will did not want to have counseling, but he was just expressing psychological defense mechanisms. One day, Sean, the counselor, asked Will if he had any soul mates, somebody who challenged him, in his life. Will answered that he had plenty. Sean asked him again to name them. Will answered Shakespeare, Nietzsche, Pope, Kant, and on and on. Sean asked again if he could have a dialogue with them. Will could not answer any more.

### **2. Who are the Saints in Your Life?**

We celebrate today as All Saints' Sunday. All Saints' Day is on November 1st, and many churches celebrate All Saints' Sunday before or after November 1st. By the way, Halloween means the evening of Hallows, and Hallows means the Saints. So Halloween itself means the evening of the Saints. In many ancient cultures in the Middle East, the day began with the sunset rather than the sunrise. So, we can say that Halloween and All Saints' Day might fall at the same time or come from the same origin, even though our contemporary Halloween cultural things such as candy, trick or treating, and costumes have no direct connection with the Christian meaning of All Saints' Day.

Our founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, celebrated All Saints' Day. Wesley called it "A festival I truly love," or "A day that I peculiarly love." We, United Methodists, believe in saints, but not in the same way as the Catholic Church. We do not have any system whereby people are elected to sainthood. We do not pray to saints. We do not believe that they serve as mediators with God. However, we recognize Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and many other followers of Jesus Christ as saints. And we also recognize Christians from every time and place. Yes, every Christian can be considered a saint. We honor especially those who lived faithfully and shared their faith with us, those who have shared good times and bad, joys and sorrows, and those who have laughed and cried together with us in Christ.

Who are the Saints in your life? Is there somebody who loved you, inspired and challenged you, among those with whom you have lived together, like having a cup of coffee or a meal together, and have had dialogue together? In your life, who are the Saints? Your mother, your

father, or your grandparents can be considered saints for how they loved you and shared God's love and grace. In my life, my grandfather was my saint. He used to be a Sunday School teacher. When I shared my calling to be a pastor, he advised me to be a good pastor. At that time, he had been hurt by a pastor, and he stopped going to church. His simple but strong advice to be a good pastor still is in me. My grandfather died of lung cancer peacefully. Thankfully, I was able to be there.

### **3. Our Church's Saints**

And our church has saints, too. At the 2023 Annual Church Conference on December 2nd, our church will have a time of remembering our saints who passed away this year. As it is All Saints' Sunday, I would like to remember Rosse Hemeon. Our beloved church leader Rosse Hemeon passed away on May 17th, 2023. He was like my grandfather. At my first Thanksgiving in Gilroy, he invited me and my wife to his family gathering. I met a lot of his family members, of whom I could not remember all of the names. But I felt that the hospitality and the atmosphere of the family gathering was like a big holiday in Korea. They showed us how to play ping pong with more than 10 players all together. I was also invited to their Easter Family gathering, too. Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ with the family with an Easter egg hunt and dying eggs was a precious memory to me. When I came to Gilroy UMC, Rosse was our church finance chair, too. And our church had just barely started having a Stewardship Campaign again since 2016. For 2017, only 2 people submitted the pledge form. For 2018, only 5 people submitted one. I learned that there had been a lot of

resistance and hesitation about restarting a stewardship campaign. To start the stewardship campaign and to talk about money is not always easy. Nevertheless, Rosse was there for the church. As I came to Gilroy in July 2018, I was not there at the beginning of our stewardship stories. But Rosse continued to challenge our church and to plant the seeds of stewardship and water them. When I looked at the numbers of pledge forms, I appreciated Rosse and his gentle presence for our church. I still remember his hand drawn chart of how many pledge forms the church received. In your church life, who are the Saints?

#### **4. Communion with our Saints!**

Today, we will have communion. And thank you so much for bringing your photos and mementos in memory of our loved ones who have passed away. If you could not bring one, no worries. During the communion, there will be a time to lift up the names of our loved ones. Gently get ready to name them during the communion. There is a mystery in our communion, because the communion table symbolizes our heavenly banquet, like today's scripture reading in Revelation. Someday, we will be together with all the company of heaven, our loved ones, our saints, and our children of all generations. We will be saints to our children and all generations. We all together will praise our Lord together, and join their unending hymn.

I also invite some of you to bring photos of your animals who have passed away, whom you loved, and who loved you. When I did my first blessing of the animals, I learned that John Wesley believed that as there were animals in Eden, they will be restored to their original

creation by God in the new heaven and earth. In the new heaven and earth everything will be perfect. I also believe that we will meet our animals in the new heaven and earth. They might be joining our unending hymn together.

Please come to the table of our Lord with faith of hope, resurrection, communion with all your saints, and a new heaven and earth! And live with this faith here and now! God will be with us until Christ comes in final victory, and until we feast at his heavenly banquet.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, thank you so much for all of our loved ones in our lives and in our church. Thank you so much for each other who live faithfully and share their faith. Thank you so much for your promise of hope for the heavenly banquet. In Jesus' name. Amen.