

Touched By Christ
A sermon by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young
Presented on Sunday, November 7, 2010

Sermon Prayer:

Let us pray. Gracious God your word has called us here once again; has drawn us near to the symbols of our faith that we might praise your holy name and celebrate your presence in our lives and in the life of our community. Gracious God, as you speak to us in this time of worship we pray that your word will take root and grow into our lives that we might lose ourselves in you and find ourselves risen to new life in Christ serving you in every day in deed with every thought and word bringing honor and glory to your name.

Amen.

Sermon:

I don't know if you've ever thought about this before but I believe one of the awesome privileges that we share as a Christian community is that we have the opportunity to pass on the touch of Christ. It was Jesus Christ who touched the lives of those first followers. It was Jesus' words that filled their ears. And it was the message from God that brought hope to their hearts, but it was Jesus' touch that changed their lives. Think of the people who were touched by Jesus as you read through the scriptures. Those who were healed by his hands; those who received blessings at his hands; those who were closest to him, praying with him and he was laying hands upon each one. And those faithful first disciples passed that touch on to the next generation and the generation after that and the generation after that until the touch of Christ has come down to us and has touched our lives.

And perhaps we see that touch most profoundly given in church through the act of the sacrament of baptism. Where through the institution of water and the laying on of hands of the ordained minister a life is claimed for God

and for God's kingdom and the touch of Christ is passed on that that one, that that life might join a community of faith that is seeking to find ways to pass on that loving, gracious, caring and healing touch of Christ to a world that so desperately needs to be touched by God's love.

Is it not an awesome privilege that we share? And I think one that we do not think about too frequently and one that we often take for granted. That leaving this building and going about the business of our daily lives we often forget that God calls us to pass on the touch of Christ to those whom we meet along life's way.

I share this today because in the life of the church today is known as All Saints Sunday. All Saints Day is always November 1st and with the business of our lives being what it is, the church over time has finally sort of given way to that and we've said ok, All Saints Day usually occurs on a weekday. It's very hard to get people to come out to church for a worship service on a weekday and so we're going to call the first Sunday in November All Saints Sunday. It's going to be a time for us to remember those who have passed on the touch of Christ to our lives. It is a time for us to remember those faithful ones who have given so much of themselves to the point where our lives receive the blessing of God. And so today we pause just to give thanks for those faithful ones.

And it's important for us to realize that in his letters Paul refers to the saints, not just those who have gone on to a higher glory in God's heaven. But he writes his letters to the saints of a particular community. And if he were writing a letter to us here in New Brunswick he would address us as the saints.

Have you ever thought of yourself as being a saint? I know myself pretty well and I'm very reluctant to say I'm a saint. And yet Paul has the audacity to call us, to call you and to call me saints. Not just those who have gone on to the higher glory but those who still find themselves in the midst of the struggles of life. Getting our hands dirty with the dirtiness of life and

trying to provide for our families and striving to do good things yet knowing all the time who we really are deep down inside. And so it's a tough phrase for us to swallow. It's easier for us to look at others and to say you know this one inspired me. Gee, if my great-grandmother hadn't of done this I wouldn't be who I am today. And if this teacher over here had not taken the time with me I would have never learned that subject. We like to think of saints as outside of us. And typically we tend to think of saints as those who are no longer with us in body but we carry in our memories and can continue to shape us. Their lives continue to be a blessing even though they are absent from our ranks.

But today in this reading from Ephesians Paul dares to call us saints. And so I would like you to do something right now in our worship. I want you to find somebody near you and I want you to look at that person and just say, "You are a saint." Go ahead. [Hear the congregation saying to each other, "You are a saint."] I'm glad that we can laugh at ourselves. Felt a little awkward didn't it? I'm a saint? Me? Karen, you're a saint. Daphne got me before but that was good; that was good.

Think how the world would be a different place if you weren't here. Think of the lives that you have touched with the touch of Christ, oftentimes never even realizing that you were doing it. Think of how different those lives would be if you weren't there at the right moment to pass that touch on to someone who so desperately needs it. Think of your own life. How your life would've been different if one of the saints of God hadn't touched your life with the touch of Christ. And you know the neat thing about it? Is you don't have to be a Christian to pass on the touch of Christ. God will use whoever to pass that love on to someone who desperately needs it.

And so Paul is reminding us in this letter and in the other letters where he addresses the saints, Paul is reminding us that we are called at the very heart of our faith; we are called to pass on what we have received; what

has been given to us. And the amazing thing for me was that thought came together this week with our stewardship theme. I never planned it that way. The theme of "giving is living." And when you think about the saints in your own life who have given so freely of themselves that you might know just how much God loves you, what they discovered through that life of giving was that they were living. They had found the meaning of life which comes from our creator. God from the very beginning is a god who gives. And through giving God finds life. God breathes life into us. God nurtures us along life's way just as children are nurtured and raised by a family. And we come to the point in our maturity where we suddenly realize we have been brought to this point to give ourselves for others just as God has given himself for us.

So there is someone outside of these doors; there is someone sitting in these pews that is waiting for you to give what they most need. And we thank God today for those saints who have not withheld themselves but have given so freely of themselves that our lives might be filled with God's love to overflowing. May the example that they have set for us and may what we have received from them give us the courage, give us the compassion to touch others lives with the love of Christ just as we have received it.

Thanks be to God, Amen.