

Living Stones

**A sermon given by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young
Presented on Sunday, November 1, 2009
All Saints Sunday**

Sermon Prayer:

Lord, as we gather in this holy place and as we remember and celebrate the lives of all of those who have helped us to know you just a little better. We pray that as you speak to us in this time of worship that your voice would fall upon ears ready to hear, hearts ready to receive, and hands ready to serve. That in it all we might bring honor and glory to your name in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sermon:

It began the way any building project begins, it began with a dream - the dream of the Creator.

And one day God dreamed that there would be a world teeming with life. That dream came from the very essence of who God is. It came from the very essence of God's being. We have in the church a doctrine that is very difficult for us to understand. The doctrine of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God. And to outside observers and even to some of us inside the fellowship, it appears to be three gods, not one God. But part of who God is, is this desire, this need to be in community and to find unity in oneness in that community. And so the Trinity helps us to see one essential aspect of God's character and that is to be in loving community.

Saint Augustine in trying to help us understand this Trinity, speaks of Father and Son and the Holy Spirit being the binding love between them. That this desire to be one in community is an act of God's love and God's grace. And so, from that desire to be in community God dreamed of a world. And in one word, God created light. God said Light and there was light. God said firmament and there was firmament. God said stars and moon and there were stars and there was the moon. God said water and land and there was water and the seas of the earth and there was the land, the dry ground. And God said life and animals came into being, and God said humanity and Adam and Eve breathed the breath of God into their lungs. God speaks and a world comes into being

and the whole purpose of that creation is that God might be in loving relationship, in oneness, in unity and community with the creation.

It was the same in Noah's time – God spoke. God dared to speak to Noah and there was life and life was saved and life was preserved. It was the same with Sarah and Abraham, God spoke a word of promise and that word brought forth the life of their son, Isaac. The Israelites, as they were led by God's word to freedom from Egyptian slavery, found themselves at the base of Mount Sinai and God spoke ten words that became the identity for his people. The prophets spoke, dared to speak on God's behalf and the people of God actually heard God speaking to them through those words. And God was creating a community still that he might call his own, and that he might enter into relationship with and they and he might be one. And the writer of the Gospel of John reminds us that Jesus is God's Word become flesh. The Word that was spoken in the very beginning of beginnings became flesh to live among us, to dwell among us and to ultimately restore us to our Creator. Restore our community of love with one another; our community of love with God.

Whenever a dream begins to come into being there is always a defining moment. A blank canvass receives the stroke of a brush and a painting begins. All that follows will be defined by that first stroke of the brush. A blank computer screen receives a word and all that follows is defined by that word, perhaps a book or a story. A stone is placed on the ground and the stones that follow are defined by that very first stone that is laid as a building emerges.

Today is All Saints Day in the life of the church. It is a day for us to remember those whose lives of faith have helped to shape our life together as a community. Even if you did not know them, they have shaped your life because they in giving of themselves and of their faith have shaped the life of this community that we hold near and dear, our church. The reading from 1 Peter today serves to remind us that the moment God spoke the first word of creation the life of the church, our life in this very moment was defined. The moment God's word became flesh in Jesus the Christ our lives as they are today in this community were defined because they are defined by that first word and they find order and meaning and purpose from that first word. Just as a building finds its shape from the very first foundation stone that is laid. Just as a painting finds expression with

that first stroke of the paint brush on the empty canvas. Just as a book that we might read begins with the very first word of that book and it defines where the story will go. Today as we celebrate the lives of the saints of our lives, we come to see and celebrate God shaping us, connecting us, defining us to the end that we might know and live the life of love and grace that is God's life. God's life becomes our life as we partake of the sacraments, as we worship God together, as we pray daily in our homes and in our communities, as we study and meditate on God's word daily, and as we seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. As we practice the means of God's grace our lives are shaped like the stones that are shaped to give rise to a building. Stones that are shaped that they might fit together, might hold together tightly and might work together as one. Together with our sisters and brothers here and now and those who lived out their lives of faith and now rest from their labors we become the church; the community of faith in loving relationship with the One who creates us. The One who has created us from the very beginning with a word; the One whose dream is that we might be one with each other; that we might be one with our God in loving relationship. And so today as we focus on the foundation of our faith in Jesus Christ; as we remember those who have sat at our side and served beside us, worshiped beside us, sung beside us and prayed beside us; those who have laughed with us and wept with us; those whose lives have shaped our life individually and together; today we see ourselves built in to a house of God. To the living church, the stones of faith that we dare this day to say are living stones because of the life of our savior, Jesus Christ; because of the life of our God who has imparted and given that life to us. And so we thank God for the precious gift of the saints. We thank God that we are counted among the saints of the living God. Amen, thanks be to God.