

Let us Pray -
O God, light of the minds that know you,
life of the souls that love you,
and strength of the thoughts that seek you -
 bless the words of my lips
 and the meditations of our hearts.
Breath your life into us that we may live
in the manner you have appointed
 unto us and better love and serve you
and one another. Amen

Sermon:

I John 3: 1-3

Living in abundant Hope

Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. It is a special day of remembering. We will shortly remember, through the reading of names and the lighting of candles, many of the Saints with whom we shared our lives and who have died. It is important to remember their lives and witness among us. We will honour them today, and we will take a moment to grieve those we have lost. We will also give thanks for their life, and even more, for their place now among the saints gathered in the nearer presence of God. But is that all there is? Tears and memories? Our reading from the Book of Revelation today tells us "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes". But what about those of us left

behind to continue in this life? Because we know that we are a people promised resurrection, because we know that Christ died and rose again, conquering death forever because we know that we live in abundant hope, All Saints Sunday is a day when we the people of the church can truly rejoice - and that's the message of second reading this morning from the first letter of John.

Let me read it again for you - its only short

3 ¹ See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he^[a] is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³ And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Eugene Peterson in the Message rephrases this passage like this

1 John 3:1-3The Message (MSG)

3 What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are. But that's also why the world doesn't recognize us or take

us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he's up to.

²⁻³ But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God. And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up! What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him. All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready, with the glistening purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own.

In this passage John touches upon one of the great themes of the Bible—the subject of hope. The word occurs over 50 times in the New Testament. Our strength to live healthy, godly, productive lives is largely based on this foundational message of hope.

Without hope there is really no reason to bother trying. A state of hopelessness is very like a state of death. Hope is as essential to the human soul as water or food is to our physical bodies.

Paul wrote to the Romans Christians, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13 NIV)

In the New Testament the word hope translates roughly to mean confident expectation.

In our society hope often carries the weak idea of wishful thinking. We say, "I hope so" and often mean "I doubt so." But when you read that word in the our scriptures, understand that we are talking about a firm expectation, a deep knowledge that we are loved by God and that this kind of hope has a profound influence on the way we live.

Our text this morning is a reminder of God's promises to you and me. We learn from it just how essential hope is to us now, today.

If I were to ask you the question this morning, "What are you looking forward to?" how would you answer? If I were to strengthen that question by asking, "What are you living for?" I would be touching on this issue of hope.

In the first verse of our reading John states "See what love the father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are."

Talk about hope! but because repetition reinforces a point in verse 2 he says " Beloved, we are God's children now;" Notice he doesn't say 'Will Be" John strongly says "we are God's children now"

We need to know this.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John verses 1-13 we are

told that¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

We are not children of God because we were born into a particular family or because we are better than anybody else out there. We are children of God because we receive and accept the grace of God.

We know who we are. “we **are**-- the children of God...”

This is not just something that will happen someday in the great beyond. This is a present reality. The Scripture says “**Now** we are the children of God.” This is something we can know in the here and now—in this life.

I have at times asked people the question, “If you died today, do you know that you would go to heaven?” An answer that often comes is, “I hope so. I’ve tried to live a good life and I would hope that God would receive me.” That is a very different answer than John would have given. John knew he belonged to the Lord. He didn’t have to wait until he died to find that out and neither do we. We can and should know now that we are the children of God.

What does it mean to be a child of God? It means you are already okay with God. You don't have to earn His favour. You don't have to be good enough for God to like you or bless you. You are as Paul wrote to the Ephesians "...blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ..." and you are already "...accepted in the Beloved..." (Ephesians 1:3-6)

In fact that's what our Gospel is on about today with all the "Blessed's". At our Study on Friday afternoon we looked at how many of the words of this Scripture have a different understanding today but what it essentially comes down to is that if we trust God, live by His rules so that they become as essential to us as eating or drinking, we will find a deep peace in our lives. One interesting point we talked about is that there are 8 "Blessed are they's" but the last "Blessed" says "Blessed are you" when things get hard.

The practical significance of that is you can come to God for help whatever the need may be—even when you have failed and come short of His glory, you don't have to draw back from God but are invited into His Grace, and His forgiveness. There is our hope again, the foundation of our lives that gives us the confidence to keep going, even through the tough times.

Which takes us back to the Epistle reading - "See what love the Father has given us." It goes on to say that what we will be "has not yet been revealed/made known". Again I turn to Paul

to understand - in 1 Corinthians he says ". For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide". (1 Cor 12-13). We are limited in our understanding of God's plans for us. The world these days certainly doesn't see us as anything special at all. But we know that the subject of our hope does not end in this life, John continues on to talk about what we do know.

In verse 2 says he says "What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him."

So we know that He will appear. It's a bit like that add for shampoo - it may not happen overnight, but it will happen - We may not know when or how but we know we can trust that it will happen

In John's Gospel Jesus said,

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."
(Jn 14:1-3)

We may not have all the answers about what's to come but

here is something else we are guaranteed in this passage.

"We shall be like Him".

Think about the hope that is in that promise. There could be no greater promise than that. In our earthly existence there are limitations that we will one day leave behind.

There will be no more sorrow; No more sickness; No more death; No more crying; No more pain - All that will have passed away

Let's have another look at the reading from Revelation.

"They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;

and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

God wants to fill our hearts with this incredible hope of a different existence. This is the hope that strengthens our resolve and builds up our ability in the here and now.

The reading finishes with "And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure" "

Until I was preparing for this sermon I used to read this verse wrongly. I used to think it said, "Everyone who has this hope in Christ ought to purify themselves..." But that is not what John is saying and when you discover that you discover a golden nugget in this verse. John is telling us this **will** happen, that we **will be** purified, **because** of the influence of that hope.

Think about the hope John is talking about in this text. The hope found by God's grace in that we already know we what we have and who we are —"Now we are the children of God". And that's not all - it comes with the proverbial set of steak knives- celestially speaking - we also have the hope of eternal glory—"We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

So today, as you remember those who have gone before us, remember that God will indeed wipe every tear from our eyes. Also remember that ours is a faith of abundant hope and that as we recall the saints on this special day it is truly a day when the church can rejoice. As so I finish with Paul's prayer to the people of Rome I used earlier

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)Amen.

drawn largely from <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/got-hope-richard-tow-sermon-on-faith-63791.asp>