

Theme – That All might become Saints (Christians)

Text - Acts 26: 1 – 32

Date – November 6, 2016

Season: All Saints Sunday

Place – Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you help the Holy Spirit bring in the Saints, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

That all might become Saints, that is a Christian in this world and for all eternity. Oh, I don't know about all of you, but I do know that's my goal in life. I'll admit that I'm not very good at bringing others to faith in God, so I have to rely on God, the Holy Spirit, to work in me and in those whom I am talking to, to bring them to faith and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ, as their Lord and Savior. You see it's not up to us to bring others to faith, that is to become Saints of God, but it is up to each of us to be witnesses of God's Love, Grace and Mercy. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God and the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God to bring faith into a person. So you see, every time that any of us share God's Love, Grace and Mercy in our words and actions we are giving the Holy Spirit an opportunity to make a Saint, a Christian, a believer in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That's what the Apostle Paul is doing this morning in our reading of the Acts of the Apostles.

The Apostle Paul is taking an opportunity, given to him by God, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with another person. Now for each of us who get out and deal with people in our lives, we are given opportunity to share God's love, grace and mercy with someone every day and in most cases many people. So are you ready to help the Holy Spirit make a Saint today? Well if so or if not let's use the example that the Apostle Paul give to us in the 26th Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles to help us get ready to help the Holy Spirit make a saint today.

The Apostle Paul begins the defense of his faith before King Agrippa with these words, **"My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. [5] They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. [6] And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, [7] to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! [8] Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?"** (Acts 26: 4 – 8)

To begin our defense with anyone in this world we need to first realize and believe that God has been working in our lives from the beginning of our life. When we were conceived we were filled with the sin of our human nature, which has been corrupted ever since sin came into this world through Adam and Eve. That sinful nature that we were born with didn't lead us to God, our Creator, but to our self. Every child born in this world (except for one, Jesus Christ) is ME centered, and any mother and father can witness to the fact that their child, when born into this world, was ME centered. Thus the importance to get our children baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit can start to work in their lives to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ and grow in their faith from being ME centered to CHRIST centered.

That's what the Holy Spirit was doing in the Apostle Paul's life from the beginning and He came to believe in the hope of the resurrection of the dead through God's Word and as people shared with him God's love, grace and mercy. At the same time the Apostle Paul was greatly influence by the culture of his time. Oh, God had given him a great mind that could achieve great things and he had an enthusiasm for the things of life greater than most people, but his culture was still the greatest influence in his life.

What is having the greatest influence in your life? What is having the greatest influence in the life of your loved ones? What is having the greatest influence in the life of those you are concerned about? If it's the culture of this world then their chance of being a Saint with you in heaven, is being inhibited, unless you have a desire to help the Holy Spirit make them into a Saint by sharing God's Word, love, grace and mercy with them. That's what my mother and father desire for me, that is to help the Holy Spirit to make me a saint with them in the Glory of Heaven with all the Saints of the past. So they baptized me when I was only a few weeks old and made sure that I was involved in God's Word alone with the culture that I grew up in. I'm sure that many of you can say the same thng about your parents and still we all have let the influence of the world become a bigger part of our life at one time or another like the Apostle Paul did, as he continues to tells us, **"I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. [10] And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. [11] And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury**

**against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.” (Acts 26: 9 – 11)**

God stepped into the life of the Apostle Paul at the right time and in the right place to bring him back to his faith in the resurrection and introduced him to his resurrected Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God has stepped into each of our lives, maybe even more than once to set us back on the path of righteousness given to us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God wants all of us to be with Him in the heavenly home He has prepared for us to be His Saints, but will we listen to His Word, will we let the Holy Spirit go to work in our lives? It took a lot of Saints to step in and help the Holy Spirit work in the life of the Apostle Paul. It took a lot of Saints to step in and help the Holy Spirit work in our lives to make us God’s Saint, Christians, those who believe in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The Apostle Paul acknowledges that many Saints had been working in his life to help the Holy Spirit bring him to faith in all that God has done for us in this world, as he says, **“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, [20] but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. [21] For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. [22] To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: [23] that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” ( Acts 26:19 – 23)**

Do you know that God is working in your life every day? Do you have the desire to help the Holy Spirit make someone into His Saint? Then let God do His work in you through His Word and Sacraments and by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with others in your life so that they can come to join the Saints of God with you. Say with the Apostle Paul, **“Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains.” (Acts 26:29)** That’s what the poem called “Safely Home” is reminding us of. That we all need to help the Holy Spirit make saint so that we can all join with God at the table in our heavenly home. Listen again to this poem that Donna Taube shared with us in her live and at her funeral only a few months ago.

I am home in Heaven, dear ones; Oh, so happy and so bright! There is perfect joy and beauty In this everlasting light.

All the pain and grief is over Every restless tossing passed; I am now at peace forever, Safely home in Heaven at last.

Did you wonder I so calmly Trod the valley of the shade? Oh! But Jesus' love illumined Every dark and fearful glade.

And He came Himself to meet me In that way so hard to tread; And with Jesus' arm to lean on, Could I have one doubt or dread?

Then you must not grieve so sorely, For I love you dearly still; Try to look beyond earth's shadows, Pray to trust our Father's Will.

There is work still waiting for you, So you must not idly stand; Do it now, while life remaineth - You shall rest in Jesus' land.

When that work is all completed, He will gently call you Home; Oh, the rapture of that meeting, Oh, the joy to see you come.

Are you ready to join with all the Saints of God? Then come to the table of the Lord. When I was a young man, involved in my church's Youth Group in high school, we once when to Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Broomfield for a Youth gathering. After many various activities, we all came into the sanctuary and we all sat down in the front pews and had a devotion with the pastor about communion. He read some Bible verses and talked about communion with us and then when around the group asking each of us what we hope to receive from communion as we receive it today. My answer was "strength." He asked me, "Why is strength so important to you?" I answered, "Because I know that Jesus has taken away all my sins but I need His strength to lead the life He wants me to live." The pastor then said, "Than come to the table where all the saint of the past and present received their strength. For as we come to the Table of the Lord we are joined with all the saints of the past to be strengthened in our faith in God." That's my word of encouragement for you today, as we celebrate with the Saint of the past at the table of the Lord. Come to the Table of the Lord and be strengthened with all the saints. For there is much work to be done as we help the Holy Spirit make saint so that all might become saints and share in the glory of our heavenly home with all the Saints. Amen.