

Simplicity: Legacy

Matthew 6: 19 - 24

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Every year, on the first Sunday in November, we celebrate All Saints Day and honor those in our congregation who have passed away in the previous year. This tradition goes back to at least the third century when the Church set aside a day to remember the early Christian martyrs. Over time, the Catholic Church began honoring their Holy Saints on this day. While as Protestants we don't have saints like those in the Catholic Church, we do celebrate those people who have been saints in our lives - teaching us by their example what it means to live faithfully and follow Christ.

Today, we remember twelve saints of this church whose names you will hear read shortly. Among them are a man who single-handedly started and equipped a school band for the Bishop Lawi Imathiu Secondary School in Meru, Kenya. A mother who made all her kids' friends feel welcome and comfortable in their home and another who was her daughters' best friend. A woman who was an unwavering advocate for social justice. A father so humble that no one knew he invented the port that would become the standard tool for treating cancer patients. There are musicians and travelers, avid readers and great athletes, people who could make you laugh and those who would make you think.

What all of these people have in common is their deep love for their families and their desire to make a difference in the world. We are in the middle of a sermon series entitled "Simplicity" in which we are exploring ways to simplify our lives to make more room for God and for what really matters. As we celebrate these saints, we have the chance to consider what makes for a meaningful life by remembering the legacy they left behind. We often think of legacies as being money or material possessions. Yet, for those of us who follow Jesus, our legacy is our love and the impact we have on the world.

This is what Jesus meant when he said "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Whatever earthly treasures we have - money, status, success - are impermanent. They mean little beyond the limits of our lifetimes. Yet, the heavenly treasures - those that reflect the love of God as expressed through how we love others - are eternal because they impact people and the world long after we are gone.

Of course, that is true in the life of the church, as well. A child learns unconditional love by being loved unconditionally by their grown-ups. A grandson learns the importance of helping others by serving meals at Alpha House with his grandmother. A daughter learns to give to the church and other charities by talking with her family about money. A gay teen learns about acceptance and welcoming by experiencing the love of a church like ours. We build the kingdom of God when we listen to those who are different from ourselves and act to make their lives better. Hungry children do better in school when they have food their parents have learned to grow from church volunteers.

This is what the kingdom of God looks like, and this is the legacy we have the potential to leave. As we listen to the rest of Rutter's "Requiem", I invite you to let the music carry you into a time of reflection about what you want to do that makes a lasting impact on the people you love and the world you live in. What do you need to change in your life to make time and energy to do that? What role can the church play in helping you make a difference?

Thanks be to God for the saints who have gone before us, for what they have taught us and how they have loved us. May we leave such a legacy for those who follow. Amen.