

Saints Alive

Big Idea: All Saints Day is the perfect occasion to remember that, while we are honouring the saints of the past, they are alive and well with Jesus cheering on the saints of the present, which includes us.

Today, November 1st, is All Saints Day (or All Hallows Day), the day following All Hallows 'Een (Halloween). It is the annual celebration of the saints who have gone on before. These saints are often revered as if they attained a level of holiness far beyond the rest of us. But they were just ordinary people, like us, serving an extraordinary God Who made it possible for them and all of us to live in His holiness.

1. Past saints were saved by faith

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Sometimes we think the saints of the Bible and church history were larger than life, almost superhuman. The truth is, they were flawed humans just like us. The “holiness” implied by the term “saint” came through faith in God and the coming Messiah. There’s no better illustration than Jacob and Esau. Esau simply didn’t care about God (Hebrews 12:16-17) and his responsibility to carry on the Messianic line. He sold his birthright for a pot of lentil stew (Genesis 25:29-34). Jacob was a schemer and deceiver (living up to his name “supplanter”) yet he earnestly sought after the things of God, like Esau’s birthright and Isaac’s blessing (Genesis 27). He even experienced a life-changing and name-changing encounter with Jesus Himself in the first recorded UFC event (Genesis 32:24-32)! Now that’s the kind of persistent faith that qualifies a deceiver for sainthood.

2. Present saints are saved by faith

We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain. Hebrews 10:19b-20a

When Jesus died for our sins, the temple curtain separating common people from the Holy of Holies, was torn from top to bottom. At that moment, the saints who had placed their faith in the coming Messiah were released from “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:19-31), may even have walked the earth again briefly (Matthew 27:50-53), and then were translated to “paradise” (Luke 23:43). The sin that separated them and that separates us from the presence of Jesus was paid for when Jesus declared “it is finished”. *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast* (Ephesians 2:8,9).

3. While we honour past saints, they are cheering us on

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1

While All Saints Day for some includes a Festival of the Dead, the Bible tells us that the saints we honour are alive and well and gathered in the grandstands of heaven cheering on the saints of today. This “cloud of witnesses” refers to the hall of faith of Hebrews 11, which includes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. After reading about their faith-full exploits, it’s humbling to discover that we are called saints too, just like them (Hebrews 13:24; Ephesians 4:12). How does this status of sainthood affect the way you will live this week?