

Today we are celebrating All Saints Day! We remember with thanksgiving all of God's faithful servants who are here today and who are now with the Lord.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

[Intro]

We are living in a time where the culture is increasingly self-centered in every possible way. Just turn on the TV for just a few minutes. We see cell phone commercials where people are posing for selfies. We see football players celebrating a sack by posing, while their team is down 30 points with two-minutes remaining. Or, we see talk shows such as The View or The Talk, where the hosts act as if they are wiser than anyone else on earth.

The Apostle Paul through inspiration writes a very complete list of the world in the last days in the beginning of the third chapter of Second Timothy: He writes, ***"For people will become lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power."***

Tucked in that long list is "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." This pleasure is turning self-indulgence and entertainment into idols. We see this all the time. Even if you avoid TV shows such as Entertainment Tonight, Extra, Access Hollywood and SportsCenter, you will know the idols of the entertainment industry when you purchase your groceries. You'll see the array of magazines devoted to today's idols, and according to that industry, we are to care what they think and do. We see this also when celebrities and athletes endorse a product or political candidate.

From the idol of entertainment, comes the creeping of false teachings into our households. All people need to be careful about how the culture affects them in our daily lives. The mass media may not change the way you think over night, but it does have an effect on your mind over time.

Verse seven in the epistle gets to the matter of today's culture. Paul writes, for they ***“are always learning and never able to arrive at the knowledge of truth.”*** What is truth? What is sin? Who is a saint?

[Truth]

For the world, truth seems to be a relative term. Even for us -- it can be a relative term. Merriam-Webster defines truth as: the real facts about something. Well, who outlines the real facts? The government? Science? The movie “A Few Good Men” let us know that we cannot handle the truth.

When truth is a matter of human opinion, rather than divine revelation, people do as they wish, for it is only up to them.

The truth of the matter is that only God gives us the knowledge of truth. As we heard last week, Jesus said, ***“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*** (John 8)

Jesus speaks this truth in today's Gospel.

And seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. Jesus then spoke what would be known as the Beatitudes. Each of these blessed statements spoken by Jesus do not tell us how to become blessed; rather, they describe the blessedness that already belongs to all believers in Christ.

The truth, according to Paul, will make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

[Sin]

Because of truth, we know of our sin. Returning to last week's Gospel, Jesus said, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."*

Today, much of what we identify as sin, is considered a virtue or right by the culture—such as abortion or gay marriage, or even alcoholism, which now has to define the difference between drunk versus buzzed, which are the same thing. Some of us here today may consider some sins as virtues or rights. As I mentioned earlier, the mass media can change the way we think on various issues.

So, what does the world call sin? Many would say that sin is anything that we feel uncomfortable with. It is just a feeling. For them, sin has nothing to do with truth. For many in the world, and many of us, we think the word "sin" was made to stop us from living. The world believes that because it's based on a feeling, they say that Christians identify a person as a sinner, because we condemn things that we are uncomfortable with. And since we live in this world, I'm sure that that idea of this meaning of sin has slipped into our thoughts.

God calls sin the rejection of His will and His ways. A sinner is anyone who betrays and rejects God in any thought, word, or deed that departs from the will of God. Sin is not obeying the Ten Commandments and not fearing, loving and trusting in God above all things.

For the world, what is the consequence of sin? It is everything from nothing to regret to hell.

[Saints]

We hear all the time that Christians are saints and sinners at the same time. So, what does it mean to be a saint? And, this has nothing to do with the New Orleans Saints. Although, there may be some saints who work or play for that team.

"All of us are saints, and accursed be he who does not call himself a saint and glory in it. If you believe the words of Christ, you are a saint

as well as St. Peter and all the other saints; for, depend on it, Christ will not lie to you. Therefore if you do not say: I have as much as St. Peter and am as saintly as St. Peter, then you are ungrateful to your Lord Christ...He who does not do it is slandering Christ and Baptism.”

Not only do I believe this, but Luther said it. So, yes, all believers in Jesus Christ on earth and in heaven are saints.

Like the word “sin,” the word “saint” has been tweaked with over time. Many in the world think that being a saint has become synonymous with the phrase “holier than thou.” And, we know that is not true. Being a saint has nothing to do with perfection, it has everything to do with believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and so we are wrapped in His robe of righteousness.

We are saints because we know what Christ has done for us. He came to redeem us, who are lost and condemned persons, He purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. As saints, we are His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. We are saints, because we know it to be true that He is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.

[Conclusion]

Being a saint isn't about perfection as the world proclaims. Being a saint is living out the blessedness that already belongs to all believers in Christ. Being a saint is living out the truth of the Scriptures in season and out of season (2 Tim. 16-17; 4:1-2). Amen!

Now on this All Saints Day, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord!
Amen!