

Touched By A Saint (Psalm 31:23,24)

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St. John's Presbyterian Church

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Love the Lord, all you saints!

*The Lord preserves the faithful, but abundantly
repays those who act haughtily.*

*Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait on the Lord.*

Each one of us in worship today are here because at sometime in our lives, we were touched by a saint. Have you ever had breakfast with a saint? Have you ever had an argument with a saint? Have you ever hugged a saint? I believe you have, whether you realized it or not. Each one of us is here because our lives have been touched by at least one saint.

I would like you to think about this for a few moments. We each have our own Christian story to tell. We each have a history in Christ. Each one of us is on a pilgrimage of faith. Somebody helped start us on that pilgrimage, and someone helped us and encouraged us every step along the way. It is these people who we recall and are thankful for today.

Perhaps we never stop to think that there might really be saints in our lives or even in our families. Perhaps it is because we really know these people, because we really have had breakfast and arguments with some saints, that we cannot see them for what they are and have been to us.

Who is responsible for our being here this morning? Who are the saints of our faith pilgrimage and our life's sojourn? Whoever they are, we owe them a great deal and today is the day we pause to thank them. In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us about the Kingdom of God. He tells us that to be in the Kingdom is to be comforted, to inherit the earth or the promised land, to be satisfied, to obtain mercy, to see God, and to be called God's children, His sons and daughters.

Also, within the beatitudes are descriptions of those who receive the promise. People who cling to God in simple trust, folks who are single-minded in their love for God, although they may be oppressed by the world, are merciful to others. Where-ever they go, they are bringers of founders of peace. These people become part of the Kingdom of God in death because they are part of it in life! Not only are they part of it, but also, they reveal it to others by their lives. These are the saints and this is their day!

Are we still having trouble naming the saints of our own lives? Who took us to church for the first time? Who first told us about God and answered our questions? Who taught us how to pray? Who taught us in Sunday School? Who baptized us? Who stands with us in the pew when we praise the Lord in worship? They are none other than the saints of our lives. Too often we take their presence for granted. Too often we fail to understand fully how much they have done for us, or how often they have prayed for us. Too often we fail to give our saints the respect due them because we think of them when they are grouchy, sick, defeated, or confused. Simply because we know them better than most, how human they really are, we sometimes fail to see the grace that sustains them, and that has thus sustained us. Their names are seldom written in lights or even in

history books, but family Bibles are full of their names. Who has been there to comfort or cheer us when all seemed lost?

The school teacher, the professor, speak of the saints who influenced him or her. Another may speak of the civil rights movement, the marches in the streets of places like Montgomery and Birmingham. Some may think of those who marched in the streets of Winnipeg many years ago for the rights of Canadian workers. One may not know the person who influenced them regarding rights, freedom, justice, etc., but they were influenced by their speeches and their conduct.

A saint of the time became a presence forever. Another recalls an aunt or uncle, the only other member of the family who attended worship, the one who went out of their way on Sunday morning to fetch them and did it without fail or complaint.

The most glorious thing about our saints is how they inspire and challenge us. Because of who they were or who they are, they cause us, urge us to become more than we are, to become all that we are capable of in Christ. They are who they are because of Jesus Christ and their lives urge us toward the same closeness and bolster us along the way.

Because we have been touched by the saints, we are capable of becoming like them. That is exactly what they want us to do. They want us to take what they have given us and build upon it to such an extent that their witness pales in comparison to our own.

I am not in this pulpit this morning speaking with you because God picked me up from where I was and dropped me here. I am here because of what God has been doing in and through the lives of the saints long before I was born. I am here because of what God has been doing in my life all along. I am here because of the powerful witness of my mother and my father. My mother taught Sunday School and was active in the Women's Missionary Society. My father was an Elder who visited the hospitals and nursing homes nearly every Sunday afternoon. I went with him particularly to the veteran's hospitals and came to know the wholeness of people with broken bodies who served in both World War 2 and the Korean War. I am here because of other people who occupied other pulpits at other times in my life; because of people who were willing to get up before I did on Sunday morning to make sure I had a Sunday school lesson or a sermon. I recall when I was in the second grade of what we called Grammar School, my teacher who was also my Sunday School teacher. I remember vividly how I thought she was the most beautiful and wonderful lady in the whole world. I remember how much it upset me when she got married and did not teach at our school or church any more, but she has remained part of my story of one of my saints. I am here because when my Call to Ministry came, I was blessed to be part of a community of faith who nurtured, supported and encouraged me. I am here because of a family who offered me a scholarship to study at university. I am the recipient of the love of God through some saints right here in St. Johns who are some of my everyday saints, and the daily saint that God has given me in the person of June, my wife.

Who are your saints? Name them in your heart and give thanks. Today is their day. But more important, today is our day too, because they pointed us and still point us toward our Lord and Christ. The very fact that we are together here right now testifies to their love and the love of the

One who gathers us all. In ways we cannot comprehend, we gather here today as part of a community – The Communion of Saints. For all the saints, Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Prayer: Most Holy God, we earnestly thank you this morning for all your saints. Inspire and enable us that we too, might be your instruments of love in the world. Knowing that to you belongs all glory and honour, we pray today in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as people who want to be a signpost of your Kingdom. Amen.