

This All Saints Day is like none we have experienced as the church.

There is an immeasurable grief that comes along with losing someone you love and that has impacted your life;

It is another thing that as a country we have lost over 200,000 people to this pandemic that has us worshipping online and not gathering for holidays.

I am truly concerned for how we will mourn as a country.

How we will take time to grieve the losses that are still accumulating every day.

What All Saints Day gives to us is not only a time to mourn as a community, but to remember we do not stay in this place of grief.

The beatitudes in Matthew tells us that those who mourn will be comforted in this sermon that flips the traditional script of power in community.

This theme we see throughout our scriptures recognizes that the values and labels that the world give us do not make us who we are.

That even in great loss there is hope.

So where does this hope come from?

From creative one line motivational passages?

It may come in study of scripture and worship together.

It may come from a friend that always knows when you need a pick me up.

The author of First John knew that hope is something that is tied into identity- our identity as God's children.

Our labels of how we identify change throughout time.

I have gone from seminarian, intern, to now Pastor and Mission Developer.

In the rite of ordination the bishop prayed over me, other clergy extended their hands in prayer to send the spirit upon me, and gave officially that label of "The Reverend" was one more label I could tack on a business card.

I am sure you have titles for yourself that you can think of.

Take a moment now to reflect-

Child, spouse, friend, teacher, leader, parent, etc.

But what do any of those labels mean apart from the one given to us by our creator?

Child of God.

The author of 1 John is writing in a tense time for the church.

He writes about those who oppose faith, those who children of God need to keep guard against.

He writes in our passage today that “it has not been revealed what we are to become in the future-“ this lack of clarity for what will be.

But what is central in this short letter is that the hearer must cling to the identity of child of God.

Those that we will name in prayer all had an identity in their life here on earth.

But what identity carried them through after death?

It was not their identified political party or status of wealth.

It is their identity in God.

This is where our hope lies for those we love who have joined the saints.

And for a long time, I thought All Saints day stopped there-

But a group that I meet with weekly to talk through the texts with helped shine a different light on this day for me.

One day, we will all join the saints.

Another thing this year has given us is the very clear truth of our frail mortality.

What are we doing here and now for the children of God who come after us?

The author of first John echoes the words of Jesus in chapter 4 where he says

“Beloved- if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another. No

one has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another, God dwells in us, and God's love is brought to perfection in us."

These are words of hope.

These are also words to act on!

Living into our identity as children of God means we do not keep this aspect of our lives bottled up.

It means that we live out in love the love that God has for us.

That our other labels and identities are deeply connected with ours as child of God.

That when I am trying my best to juggle being a mom, starting a new church, and being an active participant in movements for justice in our city, that none of these roles are done outside of my core identity.

That when I am faced with a choice, I can only make that choice remembering the love that God has for me-

And for God's other children.

Connected in this identity we live in ways that seek justice, that show love, and that keep us humble in our other identities.

In this way we give thanks for the Saints who have gone before us and taught us so much.

We try our best to emulate the body of Christ for those who come after us.

And we live each day as children of God in a world tries to make other labels more important,

We are reminded of the deep love God has for us, for all of us, and that we are called to emulate that love in the world.