

Becoming More Saint and Less Sinner

by Keith Hartsell

To become more saint and less sinner, we must exalt God together in worship, praising Him with our whole hearts and remembering His deliverance and blessings.

Duration: 15:39

Scripture: Exodus 15:2, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 149:1-3, Daniel 7:9-10, Daniel 7:13-14, John 4:14, Revelation 7:9

Topics: "Saint"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes a hypothetical scenario of a multicultural crowd coming together to celebrate the name of Jesus. The speaker emphasizes the importance of praising God and giving thanks for all that He has done. They highlight the need to remember God's deliverance and not forget His blessings. The speaker also discusses the significance of worshiping God with joy and celebration, rather than in a lifeless or stoic manner.

Transcript

Wonderful. Well, what a great week this has been for Chicago. We are no longer underdogs.

But it was a tremendous joy to watch the World Series from Los Angeles, where Ken and William Beasley and I were at the Diocese of Western Anglican Conference. They had invited Greenhouse to come and be a part. And I'll explain a little bit more about what that means during our announcement time.

But celebrating amidst strangers. I feel like there's a lot of experience this week of being together with strangers and being held together by this common experience that all of the country was watching and participating in. And people who did not know me were cheering me on as I cheered on the Cubs.

So, as we begin diving into the Word of God for this All Saints Day, let's begin by asking God to pour out His presence upon us and to help us understand and grow in His Word. The Lord be with you. Let us pray.

Father, we ask, would You pour out in great abundance the very presence and Spirit of God upon us. Fill this sanctuary, fill our hearts, fill each child that has gone downstairs and in this room with Your holy and life-giving presence. And help us, Lord, to receive the seed of Your Word in our heart.

Make the ground of our hearts to be like fertile soil so that Your Word would grow and bear fruit. Thank You, Lord. And help us, Lord, to join with all the saints that have gone before as we worship You on this day.

We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. So today, in a shorter than normal sermon due to the liturgy around baptism and our celebration, I just want to dive in a little bit to the liturgical feast of All Saints and to talk about what it means to be a saint.

Martin Luther has coined a phrase in Latin that means we are both saint and sinner at the same time. What does that mean? What does it mean that we are both saint and sinner? When folks are told you are a saint because you believe in Jesus, they think, not me, I'm not good enough. Saints are people like Mother Teresa and Saint Augustine and all the great church fathers and mothers who lived courageously during dangerous times, sacrificing much to follow God.

How could I be a saint? Most of the time, I feel more like a sinner. At least I'm more aware of the sinner part of me than I am of the saint part of me. I envy other people who are more successful in life.

I envy people who are more handsome or physically fit. I envy people who are more patient with their children. I wish my family could make more money or that the difficulties in our life could be lessened by doing better.

I am often impatient and frustrated with my children. If you're visiting with us, I have six, and that's not an excuse for being impatient, but especially early in the morning at my house when my children come to the side of my bed and begin a conversation before I have awakened. It is hard for me to be a saint in those moments.

Some of my children will come at two or three in the morning to tell me about the dream they've just had. But I know that despite the sinner moments in my life, that I am also a saint, and that you, despite the sinner moments in your life, you are also a saint because we believe in Jesus Christ who died on the cross, and that's what makes us saints. He took all of our sin, all of the sinner part of us onto himself, and then he gives in exchange his righteousness, like a white robe.

This is what the symbol of this particular garment, this dress that I am wearing, is supposed to represent theologically, that Jesus has taken off his very righteousness and given it to us to wear, and that we stand as Christians no longer by our own merit or by our own good deeds, but by his righteousness. It's the symbol of the bride's gown at the wedding feast, a gown that she is adored in, representing the church, the bride of Christ, and that's what makes us saints. But how do we become more saint and less sinner? How do we grow out of the sinner parts of ourselves and become better? What does it mean to become more saint? Let's look at our passage in the Old Testament from Daniel in your bulletin.

This is a vision given to Daniel of the gathering around God's throne at the end of time, but also always present to God. And in verse 9 and 10, Daniel describes God, the one that we gather around and worship. He's sitting on his throne, and he is adorned in light and splendor.

And then verse 10 describes us, the saints. A thousand thousands served Him, and 10,000 times 10,000 stood before Him. And then in verse 13 and 14, Jesus arrives on the scene, the Son of Man, the Lamb of God.

And the saints are then described in verse 14 as all peoples, all nations, all languages, they shall serve Him. And then farther down in verse 18, the saints will all inherit and possess the kingdom forever. That crowd, that's you and me.

We stand in that crowd in this vision. It's also described from another perspective in our New Testament passage in the bulletin, in Revelation, if you'll turn there, Revelation chapter 7. Starting in verse 9, the servants of God, the saints are described, the great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, standing in the righteousness of Jesus, not in their own righteousness, not in their own merit. And what are they holding in their hands? Palm branches.

Palm branches. A sign of peace and victory. Crying out in a loud voice or with one voice, salvation belongs to our God.

They praise and extol the Lord and the Lamb together. What does it mean to be a saint? What does it mean to grow in sainthood? Is it to do more good deeds? Is it to live one's life better, trying to sin less? I believe, based on this passage and many other passages throughout Scripture, that the hallmark of being a saint and growing in sainthood is this activity that the saints do together, worshiping God together with one voice. They fall on their faces in verse 11.

And then in verses 15, 16, and 17, the description of how the saints are treated is listed. They're protected by the presence of God. He wipes away their tears, all their pain, all their suffering, and all their loss.

Jesus takes all of that away from them and then they're refreshed in springs of living water. It's poured out upon them. They can dip their hands and their mouths in the water.

They can jump with all abandonment into the water, the spring of living water that Jesus promises to the woman at the well. If you come to me, I'll give you water to drink and you'll never be thirsty again. So how do we become bigger saints and smaller sinners? I think the answer is in our psalm today.

Look at the psalm in your bulletin. This one activity, exalting God together, praising Him when they gather together, singing a new song, praising Him with dancing and with singing. I believe, brothers and sisters, as often as we do this, as often as we gather together to worship the living God, we grow in that invisible part of us that's in union with Christ.

When you ask most people who have stopped going to church why they've stopped going to church, one of the more common answers is it's sort of lifeless. It's dead. People sit in the pew, they listen, they fall asleep, and then they go home.

There's not a spirit of celebration or of joy depending on where you go. We Americans can be somewhat stoic in our worship of God, standing, singing the hymns, sitting, but the description here of dancing and singing with instruments and making new songs. Just two weeks ago, I was in a gathering that many of you were at as our diocese all gathered together in Wheaton, and more than 200 of us were there in the sanctuary, and there were different worship teams and musicians leading worship.

Derek was up there on the platform, and we had folks leading worship in English and in Spanish and in Swahili, and there was this great spirit of celebration and of joy where when you enter into it, you can feel different. You feel different. You feel more alive.

You feel like something is happening. A little bit like being in that parade on Friday with the five million people in Chicago. How many of you were in that crowd? Raise your hand if you were in that crowd on the streets.

Five million people were there, right? 2.7 million live in the city limits. Five million gathered, and the energy in that crowd, the celebration. How many of you were outside of Wrigleyville when we won the World Series? Any of you? Ryan was.

Yes. I saw some selfies in the crowd and a few videos. Now, that is not exactly what I'm describing here because there were some cranky people in those crowds, right? But imagine being in a crowd like that with every nation, every race, every language represented in our multicultural city and the surrounding suburbs coming together to celebrate this event.

Can you imagine what that event would have felt like had it been the name of Jesus that was being celebrated? The feeling of being alive, more alive than our culture has lulled us into. At the diocesan gathering called Revive, there was a song that one of the musicians had written from his own heart that we're going to stand and sing right at the end of this time of studying God's word. And these are the words in the song that hit me really hard.

Oh, praise him. Praise him. And as we stood there, singing those words over and over again with my eyes closed, I couldn't help but remember all the things that the Lord has done for me over the last 20 years.

All the desperate situations that I found myself in or our family found ourselves in where God stretched forth his hand and miraculously healed or touched one of my family members or one of the individuals in the church who was suffering from some incurable disease. The way in which the Lord stretched forth his hand and provided money when we were out or a new house or transportation when we had none or families coming to us to help with meals when we were completely maxed out. All the things the Lord has done for us.

And I remembered each baby that was born in our house. I remembered some of the crises that some of you experienced in your lives where the Lord met you. The Lord has done great things for us.

And tears started to sneak out of my closed eyes because he has truly done so much. How can you become more saint and less sinner? This is how you can become more saint and less sinner. You stand and you praise him.

You praise the name of the living God. You stand and you give him what is on your heart. The prayers and the exclamations of gratitude and joy.

You remember, you don't forget the way that the Israelites were constantly reminded of God's deliverance of the Red Sea because they forgot the things that the Lord had done for them. So let's stand together now and let's remember all that God has done for us as we sing this song together.

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