

For those who need a refresher, All Saints' is a holiday in the church calendar set aside to remember all the saints. That doesn't mean all the extra holy people; it's everyone. All of us who ever have been, are, or ever will be. We are all the saints. So, All Saints' is a celebration in honor of us. It also reminds us of a handful of responsibilities all wrapped up into one day. We owe something to the people who came before making this place possible for us to enjoy. We owe something to the folks yet to come, the many gifts we get the pleasure of providing for them, though we may never see their joy. And we owe something to all the saints now. All Saints' is a fun celebration, and it's a reminder that everyone across time and across whatever differences is holy. They may not act like it, but they can't shake the sacredness that comes with being human.

Also, I don't get to choose the scriptures we hear in church. Those are from a three-year cycle of readings laid out in advance starting around 475 years ago. There've been some tweaks, but the point is, I don't get to pick what the readings are based on what I wanna talk about. Those Beatitudes from Luke, complete with the "Woe to yous" just happened to come up while we celebrate our responsibilities to each other. Love your neighbor, feed the poor, bring joy to the sorrowful, yeah, it's pretty basic stuff. But Jesus doesn't leave it at that. He points to the other side, too. Don't get too comfortable in your ostentatious wealth. Remember the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful. And give what you have to make things better for them. Jesus has got this funny thing where he doesn't make things better for folks because they've earned it. He makes things better 'cause they need it. You know what's wild? Two thousand years later, and that's still radical. Help people 'cause they need help. You can make a lot of people mad with that sort of talk. Helder Camara said, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist." Amazing how much acting like Jesus gets under people's skin.

Anyway, I'm glad so many of you are here today. We're delighted to celebrate with you, and if this is all we ever get to see of you, we're glad we got to know you a bit while you're here. But should you ever find yourself in need or alone or hungry or able to help someone else, think of us. Come back if you like, but regardless, take our love with you and meet the needs of those that need it most. And at the very least, remember this: Jesus shook the world not because he started a religion. He shook the world because he demanded it become just. We can debate theology all we want, but when it comes down to it, what fueled Jesus was a deep distaste for greed, injustice, inequality, and hypocrisy, and he dared to tell the wealthiest and most powerful that they didn't deserve what they had. He made it worse when he said the ones they persecuted didn't deserve what they didn't have, either. Few things make the wealthy and powerful more upset than reminding them that they aren't a better kind of creature than the rest of us.

We all have the same basic needs, we have the same kinds of emotions, we have fears and worries and dangers, hopes, loves, and people to care for. We all do. But some of us sit comfortable while others struggle to decide between buying this week's groceries and fixing today's flat tire. Did you ever notice how those that sit comfortable like to come up with all sorts of reasons the poor are poor because of something the poor did? The reality almost all of the time is that the poor didn't get that way by themselves. For the rich to get richer, someone has to get poorer, and that my friends can quickly become all of us. Unless there's some secret billionaire in the pews, that is, in which case, see me after the service.

Prophets like Daniel remind us that monster kings will lose their crowns. Those who do not have enough will have plenty. The hungry will feast, the poor will cease to worry, the foreign will find homes, and the forgotten will be loved. And this isn't some pie-in-the-sky, other-side-of-the-grave thing. This is possible. This is real life, this planet, these people we're responsible for now. It can be reality. But it won't be easy, and it's

gonna take a whole lotta work. Work we need your help doing. This all comes down to love. Love's one of the few unlimited resources. And it does this weird thing where, no matter how much you love, there's more love to give still. Love breeds more love, and it really does matter. Try to hate someone you feed. Or better yet, try to hate someone who feeds you. The thing is, love is deeper than being nice. Love makes us fix what breaks the broken. Love persuades hate away. Love blurs hateful eyes, fills unloved hearts with hope, drops batons from clenched hands. Love reminds us there's always space for forgiveness for those who seek it. Love demands a better, softer, easier, more just way.

But these days, love is up against a mighty powerful enemy, the power of scapegoats. Why love the world when you can blame the ones you don't like? It's way easier. It doesn't require anything of me except to go on hating who I hate. I don't have to change, and I just might benefit to the tune of, say, a six-figure salary, a \$50,000 signing bonus, and waived student loans -- hypothetically, of course. Propaganda's a powerful thing, but my, oh, my is it compelling. When you're afraid, down on your luck, worried for your kids, worried for your aging parents, worried the place you love is slipping away, it's tempting to twist something new or different or just outside your comfort zone into demons where neighbors once stood. It's dehumanizing, literally taking the human out of the thing in front of you. And y'all, at the risk of getting theological in a sermon, that's a big ol' sin. It's a sin because we say we're all created in God's image, and removing someone's humanity denies the image of God that exists in them. In other words, dehumanization takes an everyday saint and turns them into a shell. And a shell you can starve, beat, exploit, capture, and execute with nary a concern for your own humanity. Deny that image of God, discard it, and y'all, suddenly it's as easy to hunt Latinos as to hang Jesus on the cross. It's the same thing.

We believe every single person bears a unique sliver of the image of God. That doesn't mean all they do reflects that image, but they can't lose it. We have a deeply rooted obligation to love through all the fog of blame and danger and threat, through the intentional misdirection of wealth, through the grinding force of propaganda, even in all this, we gotta go on looking for and loving the sacred hidden within. Hold that close, y'all, whether you're next to it on a picket line or rolling your eyes at its newest cause for a headline. I know. I really do know how hard this is. Love's a beautiful gift, one we tend to shelter from those who would take advantage of it. But Jesus' model shows us very clearly who to love. Everyone but with a particular focus on the ones no one else loves. Sometimes that's easier than others. "Everyone" includes a whole lot of people. Good news is, we don't have to like everyone; we just gotta love 'em. And that love looks like making sure everyone has enough; has food, clothing, and shelter; medical care; safety now and safety later; hope; opportunity; joy; community; justice; and alongside all this, more love still.

I will be the first to admit that I don't know what the way forward looks like. I don't know how we go about stopping the destruction and begin repairing what's broken, but I do know there's no way forward without love. Ultimately, our love for each other is a love for God, the source of that sacred sliver we all carry. Remember that sacredness. Remember that love. Remember that humanity, and as you leave this place, remember all the saints.