

Thomas R. Cook  
St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota  
9:00 and 11:15 a.m. Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist  
The Sunday after All Saints' Day; November 5, 2017

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## “All Saints”

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Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12; 19 Pentecost A RCL  
Note: At the baptism of Miller Hemsley and Harry Reichenbach.

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So, Harry Reichenbach, Miller Hemsley... Welcome to the family!

In case you haven't yet had the opportunity to meet Harry and Miller, they are here with their parents, siblings, godparents, and friends to be baptized into this Holy Communion of All Saints that we celebrate today.

And what a wild family we are! Two thousand years and going strong. Thousands of remarkable and colorful characters; women and men of many nations and peoples; saints from all times and places. Some are renowned for their famous deeds, some for their undaunted courage in the face of persecution, some for almost seemingly magical powers. Some lived long lives, some died at early ages, some were killed for being faithful to Jesus. Some were healers, some were peacemakers, some were soldiers and teachers. Some were kings and some were slaves.

We've heard of many of the saints. (Patrick, Columba, Mary, Francis, Nicholas, Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; how about Mother Teresa or Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Martin Luther King?) Right. Well, what about Saint Harry and Saint Miller? I'll let you in on a little secret... There are far, far many more saints of whom we have never heard, than saints you can name this morning. Saints we may never know this side of heaven, saints that we encounter in the ordinary walks of life who go about the daily work of helping us and others, sowing good in the world, and being faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

See, while we are certainly making a little scene on All Saints' Sunday about the extraordinary people we remember for their remarkable faith, the truth is we all share at least a couple things in common with all the famous saints we can think of and all the anonymous saints we cannot know. First, we all got our start just like Harry and Miller. Little babies come into this world from our mothers needing love and care and kindness from even before the moment we arrived. And second, all of us have the same job, and I'm going to call that job... hope.

Yes, hope. If there is one thing that all the saints from time immemorial up to this day had to do, it was to persevere in hope, to live with hope. Against all the odds, against all the information to the contrary, against all the hate and all the confusion and the suffering and the sickness, the injustice and war, the saints held on to things

of beauty. They reminded the people of what is good in humankind. They didn't give in to hate, and they didn't give up on Jesus, though they were often plagued with doubts and questions and confusion, just like we can be. The saints trusted in Jesus promise that all would be made well again and new. Hope for me is like this body of people who come into this place week by week to sing and pray and to say there is so much more to life than the ugly news cycle, the incessant angry tweets, the suspicion of neighbors, the flood of ills, and the fear of death. I'm not telling you those things are not real. I'm telling you... those things do not own the saints. They do not own us. We belong to the living Christ, who loves us and cares for us and gives himself for us.

So who are we in this community of the saints? Well, I know who we are supposed to be...

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...

Blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers.

Blessed are those who do the right thing, even when it hurts.

Blessed are those who show their faith in Jesus, who share his love with others even when they are insulted, ignored, belittled, and harmed by others for doing it.

That's who we are called to be. That is a saint.

Take a minute. Ask yourself how it's going. Are you finding yourself somewhere in that list? And just when you think, "No way I can ever fulfill that job description," I want you to remember this... No saint has ever batted a thousand. No follower of Jesus ever walked the path without stumbling. It's tough out there. Yet every saint who has ever come into this world came just like you did. And somewhere along the line, somebody told them about the love of God in Jesus, and they listened. Somebody showed them kindness, and it mattered. Somebody offered them hope, and they grabbed it and never let it go for ever. You work on those things, and you try to share the same love, faith, kindness, and hope, and you're walking the path of the saints.

Now, let's get Harry and Miller off to a good start on their next chapter in faith and in their story of all the saints.

## 11:15 VERSION OF THE SERMON

So, Good morning, everyone and... Welcome to your growing family!

In case you haven't yet heard, the congregation gathered at 9:00 welcomed Harry Reichenbach and Miller Hemsley into the family through baptism on this day when we celebrate the Communion of All Saints.

And what a wild family we are! Two thousand years and going strong. Thousands of remarkable and colorful characters; women and men of many nations and peoples; saints from all times and places. Some are renowned for their famous deeds, some for their undaunted courage in the face of persecution, some for almost seemingly magical powers. Some lived long lives, some died at early ages, some were killed for being faithful to Jesus. Some were healers, some were peacemakers, some were soldiers and teachers. Some were kings and some were slaves.

We've heard of many of the saints. (Patrick, Columba, Mary, Francis, Nicholas, Sts. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; how about Mother Teresa or Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Martin Luther King?) Right. Well, what about Saint Harry and Saint Miller from earlier this morning? I'll let you in on a little secret... There are far, far many more saints of whom we have never heard, than saints you can name this morning. Saints we may never know this side of heaven, saints that we encounter in

the ordinary walks of life who go about the daily work of helping us and others, sowing good in the world, and being faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

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