



WEEKLY STUDY November 5-11, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

JoyFull: A Generous and Abundant Life

Our sermon series for November is: JoyFull: A Generous and Abundant Life. How would you describe yourself? Your family? Your community. Would you use words like joyful? Generous? Grateful? Full of life? These are attributes we aspire to and want others to see in us. So how do we live in these ways? This November as we enter into another beautiful season of intentional gratitude we will be talking about how to live filled with joy in a hard world; how to live out of abundance rather than scarcity mindset; how to hold fast to hope believe that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion.

Our scripture this week is: Isaiah 25:6-9

“On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples.

A banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples,

The sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces;

He will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say,

“Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

- 1)** On this first Sunday in November, not only do we begin a new sermon series, but we observe All Saints Sunday. This is one of my favorite services each year. It's a witness to the facts that death is real; those we love are truly missed; we remember each one and celebrate their life; we trust in the promises of God.

Question: Who do you remember with sadness, love, and hope this All Saints Sunday?

- 2)** Pastor Sam reminded us that – while life is hard and death is real – we stake our lives in another world: the kingdom of life instead of the kingdom of death. She reminded us of images of heaven we find in John 14; Rev. 7:9-10; Rev. 21 and Rev. 22. Despite the number of images in Revelation, my favorite has been the image of many rooms. It's served as a reminder to me that I am not the one who prepares the places – God is.

Question: What of these images of heaven is the one that speaks most to you?

3) Pastor Sam moved us from images of heaven after death, to images of heaven among us now. She quoted from Matthew where Jesus preaches that the kingdom of heaven is near and from Luke where we are told the kingdom of god is I think you. She used the image of children's books called "Water Wow!" Where water reveals a picture the comes to life. It made me think of the "Magic Eye" pictures where a picture would look one dimensional until we unfocus our eyes and it moves into 3-D. I think as well about studying scripture time and again so that meaning shifts, changes and reveals new life.
Question: Think about our world. Are there things that if you shift the way you are viewing them reveal God's kingdom to you?

4) Our communion table on Sunday was loaded not just with the elements of communion but with an abundance of food, and Pastor Sam led us in thinking of the image of the table and the heavenly banquet. Just as the abundant table filled our eyes and triggered our senses, she gave us images from scripture: Luke 14; Psalm 23:5; Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 126. And she reminded us that we can create places of communion – food, laughter, warmth, caring, support, inclusion – now.

Question: Think about some of the best meals you have experienced – not just through the food, but through the companionship and support experienced around the table. How are you extending the banquet table to others?

Prayer: (The prayer this week comes from Openings: A Daybook of Saints, Sages, Psalms and Prayer Practices, Second Edition, by Rev. Larry J Peacock. It is the prayer for All Saints' Day found on page 320.)

"Generous and gracious God, we give you thanks for those who have gone before us who now belong to the communion of saints. We than you for ordinary person with laughter in their eyes and kindness in their deeds. We thank you for common ones with compassionate hearts and listening ears. We thank you for holy ones who saw light in the midst of darkness and potential when others saw dead ends. We than you for strong ones who remained faithful in times of crisis, who endured suffering yet remained joyous, who fought for justice when they could have chosen comfort. Help us walk in the shadow of the saints who go before us, now and always. Amen

Weekly Challenges:

In your time of prayer this week, give thanks for each of these members of our faith community who have died since All Saints Sunday, November 2022: Joe Adams, Lynn Bach, Peg Baker; Ann Crownover; Sarah Engles; Liz Flanagan; Jamie Hughes; Betty Lassing; Paul Leeper; Shirley Miller; Cliff Myers; Dana Pirtle; Charles Poole; Kay Spears; Dot Turner; Nancy Turner; Mark Whitler. Remember as well family members or friends who have died this past year as well. Consider the ways they have taught you to live abundantly. Give thanks.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)