

110324 Sermon "All Saints Day: Channel of Grace" Job 42:7-10, 16-17

1. November 1, All Saints Day, often goes unnoticed in United Methodist congregations. Unlike the more popular All Hallows' Eve or Halloween, it holds greater significance in the life of the church. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, enjoyed and celebrated All Saints Day. He saw it as a time to honor and remember the "cloud of witnesses" who have gone before in faith. He believed the day was not only about commemorating the saints but also about reflecting on the influence of their lives, drawing inspiration from their examples of faith, holiness, and perseverance.

Wesley cautioned against holding saints in too high regard. However, he also advised against disregarding the saints altogether. In his writings, Wesley often expressed joy and gratitude on All Saints' Day. In one of his journal entries, he referred to it as a day he "peculiarly loved," filled with a deep sense of connection to the saints who faithfully followed Christ, regardless of the sacrifices they made. Wesley saw it as an opportunity for Christians to celebrate the communion of saints, which emphasized that all believers, both living and departed, are united in Christ.

Wesley's view of All Saints' Day was also practical. He encouraged believers to imitate the virtues of the saints and to be reminded of the call to live holy lives, not in isolation but as part of the larger Christian community. For Wesley, honoring the saints encouraged spiritual growth, unity, and a renewed commitment to God.

2. Continuing from last Sunday, I would like to share a message from the last chapter of the Book of Job. The Book of Job indeed teaches us a profound lesson about the nature of suffering and righteousness. It challenges the assumption that those who suffer must be receiving punishment, while those

who are at peace are somehow more righteous or favored by God. Job's friends embodied this flawed view: they were quick to assume that Job's suffering was a direct result of his own wrongdoing. They could not fathom that suffering might come to someone who was faithful.

This tendency to judge others harshly while seeing ourselves as innocent is a common double standard. When we see others in pain, we may quickly attribute it to some fault or failing, believing they must have "done something" to deserve it. But when we encounter hardship ourselves, we often see it as unfair or unwarranted, as though suffering were incompatible with our own righteousness.

The truth the Book of Job reveals is that suffering is not a clear indicator of guilt or innocence. Job, whom God Himself described as "blameless and upright," suffered intensely, not because of his sin but because of a greater spiritual mystery. The reality is that suffering can happen to anyone—saint or sinner, rich or poor. Rather than jumping to conclusions, Job invites us to humbly seek God, who alone understands the deeper purposes behind both peace and pain. This calls on us empathy, humility, and recognition that God's grace is ultimately the measure of righteous life, not our own understanding of justice.

3. Verse 8 is indeed a beautiful display of God's grace and mercy. Despite the fact that Job's friends have seriously misunderstood God and misrepresented His character, God chooses not to "deal with them according to their folly." If, as Job's friends argued, God acted solely on the principles of causality and retribution, they would likely have been severely punished for their errors. However, God demonstrates here that His character transcends strict justice. He is merciful and willing to forgive. By allowing Job to intercede for his

friends, God opens the door for their restoration, showing that His desire is not to condemn but to reconcile.

Such grace invites us to approach God with humility and gratitude, knowing that He does not deal with us as we deserve but offers mercy beyond measure. This is the heart of God, the same grace that Jesus would later embody on the cross, where mercy triumphed over judgment.

4. Here, we witness one of the most remarkable aspects of Job's story: he prays for his friends who wronged him. It's a powerful act of humility and forgiveness. Could we do the same? Could we truly forgive, pray for, and bless those who have misunderstood or even hurt us? Job's example shows us that forgiveness and intercession flow naturally when we recognize our own need for God's mercy. When we stand before God, aware of our own flaws, we realize that others need grace just as much as we do.

Job's intercession brings us to a critical aspect of our calling. By interceding for his friends, Job embodies the role of a restorer. He is not a priest by title, but his act of intercession before God is a priestly act, a bridge between God and humanity. Job's friends receive life and grace because he prays for them, obeying God's command and becoming a channel of grace.

On this All Saints Sunday, we remember that the saints were intercessors. They stood in prayer for others, even those who wronged them, showing us that when we lower ourselves in humility before God, we become vessels of God's grace. This kind of prayer is costly; it requires humility, patience, and love. But God, who sees our hearts, promises to bless those who obey His Word.

5. What happens after Job prays for his friends? God restores him, granting him twice as much as he had before. Here, we see that Job's blessing flows from his obedience and his willingness to pray for others. True intercessory prayer calls us to put others before ourselves, not out of obligation, but from a heart shaped by God's grace. Job's life teaches us that when we pray sincerely for others, God renews and blesses us as well.

In this way, we see that Job becomes part of a legacy of faith, joining the saints who have gone before us. On this All Saints Sunday, we remember the saints whose lives pointed others to Christ, whose prayers sustained the Church, and whose faith remains a legacy for us. These saints lived not only for themselves but for others and, in doing so, left a witness of God's love and faithfulness.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, may the memory of the saints inspire us, and may we walk with God one day at a time. May we, too, leave a legacy of faithfulness, witnessing to the love and mercy of God. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.