**1 John 3:1-3**

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. **3** And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

**“The Saints See Christ”**

 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Halloween always receives more attention than All Saints Day. Plenty like to fixate and play around with the gruesome and scary. Let alone, the emphasis on ghosts and other phenomena is popular in our spiritualized society. Might seem to be new, but before the Reformation the medieval church had a similar dreary and dark picture. With horrid conditions caused from plague and war, they actually celebrated death. They wanted to show the power of death by acting it out or picturing it in terms of something called, “The Dance of Death.”

 Such a dance came with images of Death appearing as a skeleton, “to people representing every age and condition of life, and leads them all in a dance to the [grave](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grave_%28burial%29). Of the numerous examples painted or sculptured on the walls of cloisters or church yards through [medieval Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_Europe), few remain except in [woodcuts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodcut) and [engravings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engraving).”[[1]](#footnote-1) The best equivalent we have of this today next to Halloween is what Walt Disney produced in 1929. It is a comedic display of Mickey Mouse dancing in the grave with skeletons on black and white TV for roughly five minutes.

 If the darkness of a sin stricken world riddled with death is how the Devil fights against life. All Saints Day has something to celebrate with Christ as the center of it all. St. John describes why he made a faithful witness as an apostle saying in John chapter 20, “but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Whether it was his gospel record, the short letters of 1, 2, or 3 John, or concluding the New Testament with the book of Revelation, John promoted a dance of life from the Gospel. The saints below and above are one in Christ blessed beyond measure with joy now and forever.

 “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” The saints truly are saints for God has seen fit to love sinners! This is a hard fact to believe when life is a vicious cycle of sin and death. Humanity wants to laud works and punish evil, but God knows the final outcome made against all people. St. Paul says, “Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). This gift is to receive by faith the love God has poured out upon a sinful world. Jesus provides the answer to become children of God. He says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

 Of course, the world thinks such good news is a joke and disgrace. How can Christians who often fall short with love and good works in their own lives be any different? What hypocrites! How could a prisoner judged by our laws sitting in prison be a child of God? He is a criminal, murder, or worse! Yet, the world misses why God can call any His child. It does not know who God truly is and how He truly works to save sinners. But see what kind of love has come from God for, “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Luther explains about what the world misses, “If they believed that God would have given us love in order that through it we might become children of God, they would behave differently. They would abandon their own efforts and condemn all those blasphemies against Christ.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

 All Saints Day drives home the tension at the present time. “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared;” The saints look to Christ with hopefulness that stands. This is not the wishful dreams painted by politicians to fix the problems. It is not what businesses promote with hope to get you to spend your money. It is not the excitement over your fantasy football team or even the good news from the doctor about your health. Neither is it the pessimistic view that sees all things as hopeless. As if, God cares nothing for our suffering or pain of death. Hope is more than a power of thinking positive, but truly is a promising gift God gives in a dark world.

 Since God calls us His children, it is a present possession by baptism. We are God’s children “now” not later by the work of Jesus. Our Father gives hope to His saints who suffer under the cross to look to the sacrifice of His Son. “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” The saints are children longing for a home where sin, death, and the Devil have no say on life. Permanence is to wait now by faith in what God has promised. You are part of a true family throughout time and space. “They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:16). Our hope is to know that in such a place we will be like Jesus. Not by being God, but surely having eternal life and blessedness by being with Him. The Word and Sacrament are God’s marks of hopefulness for us today, “This Church alone is called Christ’s body, which Christ renews, sanctifies, and governs by His Spirit.” (Concordia 198:144).

 “And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” The saints are free to serve in faithfulness. Washed clean by God with purity given to us by Jesus forgiveness is full, life abundant, and salvation secure. We are free from not only the judgment of sin, but also the power of sin. Such power Christ silenced by His death and resurrection. Good works are the fruit that comes from trusting the faithfulness of Jesus for us. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). What sprout up in the lives of the saints must stand out in this world. St. Paul says, “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life…(Philippians 2:15-16). This is love purified with freedom to love because God loves us without limit.

 The light of the saints in deed and truth is love this world seeks to snuff out. We undoubtedly see it today with attacks made by extreme forms of persecution. Who does not sense the loss of a true Christian cofession among family and friends? The rules of men even seek to box out the light of Christ’s Church from the public eye. Our resources are more plentiful than what we see. We have the saints who bore their crosses before us. Hermann Sasse from his time of WWII reminds us, “Whether Christians have found themselves in the loneliness of a Siberian prison camp…or the suffering inner alienation within the great secularized ‘churches’ of our century, it has become ever more the consolation of those who have suffered for the sake of the church and whom God has led on a ‘lonely path’ to know that they are not alone in the one church of God.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

 Christ purifies our service of love with faithfulness to always find rest in Him. Rather than a dance of death, the saints have a dance of life unknown to this world. It is neither being careless or playful with the darkness of life nor are we distracted to see less than what God promises for any in His Son. All Saints Day needs no masks of Halloween or hyper-spirituality because Jesus is at the center for us to see Him. The saints below and above are one in Christ blessed beyond measure with joy now and forever. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macabre#Etymology [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Luther, M. (1999, c1967). *Vol. 30*: *Luther's works, vol. 30 : The Catholic Epistles* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (1 Jn 3:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Treasury of Daily Prayer, 870 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)