

For All the Saints

November 1, 2020

UMC Geneva IL

That hymn, “For All the Saints,” is so powerful...and so *à propos* for today. It was penned by Anglican Bishop William How and first published in 1864. Bishop How was well educated...Oxford University no less! And although offered a number of prestigious appointments as Bishop, he instead accepted an appointment in a very poor section of London. There, his parishioners called him by various names including “the children’s bishop,” or “the poor man’s bishop,” and sometimes “the omnibus bishop” due to his mode of transportation. Instead of riding in a private coach like many bishops, he took public transportation, working and living among the poor. (Sounds like someone who knew Jesus, eh.)

Each All Saints Sunday I look forward to singing this hymn. Every verse is breath-takingly meaningful. As I mentioned in my children’s sermon earlier, I officiated at both of my parents’ funerals. And I cannot help but think of them when we sing this hymn. But verses 4 and 5 are perhaps most meaningful for me.

Verse 4: “O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine! Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.”

Verse 5: “And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.”

Mom and Dad were both quite feeble and struggled with their health before they passed. But verses 4 and 5 of this wonderful hymn remind me that, compared to them and those who stand in Jesus’s presence today (as today’s passage from Revelation reveals) – we on earth are “the struggling, feeble ones”, while their “hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.”

Our passage from Revelation today offers such a word of hope! Indeed, Jesus will wipe every tear from our eyes one day. But in the meantime, please know this. God sees you. God knows your grief. God knows what challenges you are facing. And God is with you. Speaking of our struggles, God sees them. And please know that our doubts, our feelings of being overwhelmed, our questions whether God is really out there or not...these do not mean that you or I lack faith. These are not signs of failure. Quite the contrary. Our struggles and questions mean that we are taking God seriously, and thus actually reveal a deep and profound faith.

Yes, Jesus will certainly wipe every tear from our eyes one day. But between now and then, know that Jesus sees our struggles, knows our grief, and is with us. Amen.

Rev. Rich Darr - Pastor