All Saints Day
"Children of God!"
1 John 3:1-3
November 1, 2026
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this All Saints Day Sunday is from our Epistle reading, 1 John 3:1-3.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

So far our text:

There's one of the students in our school that loves to say, just out of the blue, "I have super powers". "I'm a superhero". And when this student says this, the others are quick to chime in and tell me just who they are and what powers they have. "I'm a ninja turtle!" And last night this ninja turtle proudly displayed his costume at the trunk or treat that we had last night in front of the church.

"Do you want to see my shell?" "Sure", I said. And he proudly turned around and pointed to the shell on his back. He was in his young mind truly a ninja turtle. That shell was part of being. Maybe that brings back memories of your childhood when you dressed up like someone and believed for a moment that you were that larger than life person.

Yes, Halloween involves a lot of fantasy role playing – princesses, fairies, Sonic hedgehogs…we see them all every year. And candy is passed out to them all. But is that all that we at Immanuel can give them? A sugar high? No, because yesterday was Reformation Day and we passed out the sweetness of the Gospel of Jesus. Young Superhero, there is the Superhero who loves you and He's real. His name is Jesus. And each child gets a booklet "Do you know who Jesus is?" Fantasy meet reality!

Our text today makes some bold statements of reality, not fantasy.

It begins with the word “Behold”. This word grabs our attention. Makes us sit up and listen to what God wants to tell us. Because it is really good news, that we aren’t really expecting.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”

What should we be called… in reality? Why would God call you His child? What makes you His child? On this All Saints Day, there are questions that needs to be answered. Are you a saint? Are you a sinner? What defines who you are? Do we point to angel wings on our back and say “Look, I’m a saint”.

Let’s go back one chapter to chapter two of 1 John, because that is where we find out the “who” and the “why” of who we are and who we find our greatest comfort in pointing to:

1 John 2:1-2
“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

“If anyone sins…” Well, that anyone describes you and me. That defines you and me. A sinner. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God as we know from Romans 3:23. If you don’t accept this truth, well, Jesus told this parable:

Luke 18:9-14
9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Yes, there is an unexpected turn of events in this parable. There is an unexpected and beautiful statement after the "Behold". For, the sinner who acknowledges his or her sin, is repentant and trusts in the Advocate Jesus is justified! He receives mercy! He receives forgiveness! He receives the sacrifice of Christ Jesus, the propitiation for all his sins, for the sins of the whole world, including yours and mine.

And trusting in Jesus, the righteous, God shows you His amazing manner of love…His agape love, that He would call you His children. He bestows this title on you! He defines you because of your relationship to Jesus. It is a gift, pure gift of love. It is nothing that we earned. In fact, the phrase "that we should be called children of God" is entirely passive. God does the calling.

Romans 5:8
But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Listen to what Paul said:

1 Timothy 1:15-17
This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Jesus came, Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus saves…100% the work of God that you are called a child of God through faith in Jesus. And to reassure you that this is true, John tells you plainly:

2 Beloved, now we are children of God; You are a child of God, right now, for you are loved with His agape love, called His beloved in Christ. And it keeps getting better…

and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.
Paul goes on to say:

16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen

Those who believe in Him, in Jesus have everlasting life. To have everlasting life is to be part of the household of God, not a slave as we heard last week.

“34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.”

Right now, we have the sinful flesh still, even as we are called children of God. Right now we are sinners, but at the same time, God calls us saints. How? Because you are forgiven. Sinner and saint at the same time.

Luther put it this way: “The saints in being righteous are at the same time sinners; they are righteous because they believe in Christ whose righteousness covers them and is imputed to them, but they are sinners because they do not fulfill the law and are not without sinful desires.

So God tells you plainly who you through faith in Jesus. You are a saint. This is your day – All Saints day, because as a believer in Jesus you are part of the family of God, covered in His righteousness.

So Paul begins and ends his epistles by describing the believers that he is writing to as saints:

Romans 1:7
To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:2
To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:21
Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.

And you baptized believer in Jesus receive these greetings also as saints of God. Paul wants the saints to be equipped for all the service to God in His ministry so he wrote in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:11-12
11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

And finally when your service to God in this life comes to an end God has these amazing words to say:

Psalm 116:15
Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.

Revelation 14:12-13
12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "
"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

And so saints of God, children of God, believers in Jesus, we steadfastly labor and witness of God's love in Christ Jesus to a world that doesn't know Him as we await His final coming and the final revelation of who we will be…like Him…no longer with a sinful flesh…completely restored image of God. Until then we sing the praise of the new song of salvation found in our Advocate Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Psalm 149:1
Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in the assembly of saints.

Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)