

Church of the Reformation-Lutheran, Affton, Missouri
November 7, 2010
All Saints Day

“Keep it in Perspective”

Grace, mercy... and *peace* be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I have a very good friend who constantly complains about the traffic in St. Louis. I have another very good friend who raves about the *lack* of traffic in St. Louis. The friend who sees nothing but gridlock here lived previously in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and in Nebraska. The friend who is thankful for open roads moved here from Los Angeles. *Perspective* – how we view things – can make all the difference in the way we approach the world.

Perspective is not, however, simply where we have been. It is also where we are going; it is a choice, and we must be vigilant in order to keep a right perspective on things. It can be all too easy to lose perspective, and as Christians living in a fallen world, we are not immune from this. I watched the news this morning and really, it was no different from watching the news every other day. What makes the news is almost entirely *bad* news. The few people involved in bad situations make headlines, while the few million people who got through their day safely do not.

It’s almost flu season, and I’m sure it won’t be long before H1N1 or the next mega-virus has people jumping at coughs and scared to go outside for fear of catching something. The job market is still down, and gas prices are still up. Divorce is on the rise, corporate and political corruption is rampant, and things people seemed just to *know* were wrong are now being championed as expressions of freedom and choice. Everywhere you look, things seem out-of-control,

and one might be tempted to wonder if we're headed for the apocalypse, or at least some sort of catastrophe. It can be easy to lose perspective.

But as Christians, we should *know* better than to give into the temptation to lose hope. As we celebrate All Saints' Day, we *know* that there is more to the story. As we celebrate the Saints who have gone before us and as we recognize our own sainthood by the grace of God, we have a choice to make. What will be our perspective, as those set free from the bondage of a hopeless world, lost to sin? Will we live as though the glass is half-empty, or will we live as though the glass is half-full? Or, will we simply see half-a-glass? Will we remind ourselves to look at things realistically – not from a cynical and reactionary point of view, but from the perspective of God's Word?

Will we view the reality of the world for what it is, according to God's Word: a world that does not know hope, because it does not know Him? Will we view *our* reality as *God's* reality: that we have been freed from the effects of sin; that we have *real* hope in the *real* promises of Jesus Christ? Will we take on a right perspective, rooted in God's Truth, that will remind us to live as those who have real hope, if it means that the world will not understand it? Will we live with the perspective of God's Truth, knowing that God's Word tells us that the world will not know us, because it does not know Him? Are we willing to live as saints, as those who have gone before us, as a people set apart?

Because the reality of sin is all around us. Everywhere we look, TV, movies, magazines, music, the internet and even the words and actions of the people around us, let us know that we are surrounded. Everywhere is the bleak landscape of a world overrun with sin. We are inundated, deluged, *swamped* with sin, and hope feels out of reach. Hope can even feel naïve or foolish.

Reality, though, is that the world's situation has not changed, it never has. In its rebellion against its Creator, the world has always been rife with sin and despair. Yet, through it all, God's people have lived within it: in the world, but not of the world. Think of Noah, building a ship in the desert, or Lot, trying desperately to hide the visitors from the people of Sodom. Picture Stephen, preaching God's Truth, even as the stones rained down upon his head, or the faithful Christians, thrown to the Lions for refusing to deny their Lord. Remember Martin Luther, standing before his accusers or, more recently, Columbine High School student Cassie Bernall answering "yes" before her assailant pulled the trigger.

The saints who have gone before us have faced slavery, persecution and martyrdom. They have seen plagues, wars and devastation. They, like us, had to make a choice to give into fear and hopelessness (some of them did) or to push forward with hope, doggedly pursuing God's Truth, secure in the knowledge of His mercy and resting on His promises.

The rewards that awaited them are the rewards that await us: no more hunger, no more thirst, no more war, no more pain, no more loss, no more tears! *We*, together with those before us, are the communion of Saints – *that* is our reality – *that* is our perspective! Like the Saints who lived in this fallen world before us, we have been called *children* of God – and so we are! *That* is our reality; *that* is our perspective: *we* are the Saints, and we are *not* alone! We may look to the examples of those who have come before us. We may look, not just to those with names that everyone knows, but to those whose names were just read in the service today and to those whose names only you may know of. We have the examples of the saints who have gone before to give us our perspective and reassurance.

Not only that, but your Lord knows your struggles and fears. You have a God who was not content to know you through His omniscience. You have a God who knows you because He *became* you. Remember, He didn't just *die* for you – He *lived* for you!

So what does that mean for us? It means, don't lose perspective. We have a hope that a fallen world cannot have, because it does not know God. We have a hope that, when lived out will stand out and make people uncomfortable. Rest assured, though: that does not make us foolish or naïve, because it is based in God's Word. We should never discount the reality of a world infected, broken and sick with sin. We do not look at the world through rose-colored, stained glass windows. Pretending that everything is fine denies the reality of sin and the very real hurt that people feel. We know, though, that it is a hurt and hopelessness that can only be relieved by the Gospel and, like Paul Harvey, we know "The Rest of the Story!" Like those before us, we know the real hope that comes shining through the cross of Christ. By God's grace alone, He sees *past* our sin and He says that we are His children!

So when others who have no hope look to you, show them your hope. Show them that you rest on the knowledge that this life is not all there is. Show them that you really believe that God is in control and His mercy endures forever! Above all else, do not lose sight of the light of Christ amid the darkness of a broken world.

So keep it in perspective. No matter how hopeless things may appear, God is in control and His mercies are new every morning. Together with those before us, we have real hope because Jesus Christ has made us His saints. So together with them and with the angels, we cry out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the lamb! All blessing and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever, Amen!"

Now may *this* perspective, the peace that passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds unto life everlasting, Amen.

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