

The Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Lord + Luke 1:39-55

As Lutheran Christians, we celebrate the church year, beginning with the seasons of Advent and Christmas and Epiphany, followed by Lent and Easter, and finally Pentecost and Trinity.

The Bible is filled with the events of Jesus' life: His birth, His baptism, His transfiguration, His suffering, death and resurrection, His ascension into heaven. These and so many other events in our Lord's life are what we celebrate throughout the church year.

Intertwined in the Bible with our Lord's story are the stories of those men and women who were part of His story.

The apostles, His first pastors, were witnesses to His resurrection from the grave.

His friends: John the Baptist, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and so many others who heard Him teach concerning His kingdom and saw the miracles He performed. .

His ancestors, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, King David. His family tree branches out farther and farther with those who waited in repentance and faith for His coming.

The church year provides an opportunity to remember all of these men and women, with specific days, that we would see how they richly received God's grace and mercy throughout their lives.

These men and women are called saints. The word saint means holy, but they are not holy in themselves, they did not achieve their own holiness. Their holiness, as does ours, depends upon Him alone who is holy, the Holy One, Jesus Christ, whose perfect obedience to His Father by His death on the cross made us holy.

In baptism we are holy because our sins are forgiven.

In baptism we are holy because we have been washed in the blood of Jesus, His holiness is our holiness.

In baptism we are holy because we have received the Holy Spirit who works in us the gift of faith.

Having been made holy, created in God's image, the saints who have gone before us and we who are here today have the love of Christ shines brightly through us. We love because Jesus first loved us.

The Lutheran Church teaches that the remembrance of the saints is to be commended in order that we may imitate their faith and good works. The saints are to be examples for us.

There are three reasons why we remember the various saints who have gone before us:

- 1.) that we would thank God for giving us these men and women, who have taught the faith and lived it,
- 2.) in remembering these saints, our faith in Christ is strengthened as we see the grace and mercy that He bestowed upon them, remembering that He never leaves or forgets about us,
- 3.) these saints are examples for us to imitate both their faith and their holy lives.

We do not honor these saints for their own sake, they are not to be prayed to or worshipped, but they are to be examples to us as those in whom the saving work of Jesus has been accomplished.

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we run the race, we fight the fight, in Christ we win the victory.