

Good Morning Saints. (pause) Good Morning Sinners! (pause)
(Repeat as necessary) Did you know according to Google the
definition of a saint is; _____ →

According to Google, for a saint to be holy they have to be
someone who is without sin, does not sin, and is dead. Do we
have any dead people in the room? (pause) Do we have any dead
people in the room? (pause) I dunno. (pause) I'm not convinced. (pause) Maybe we do. (pause) Is there
anybody in the room who no longer sins? (pause) No? (pause) Everybody sins? (pause) Everybody is a sinner?
(pause) Let's try that again. Good morning saints. (pause) Good morning sinners! (pause) Alright. Now I know I
am in the right place. Hear the good news sinners. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves
God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! (pause) Church, when we have
Communion and I read the words, "In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven," do you remember how we
are to respond? (pause) **In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.**

saint:

noun \ 'sānt ,

1. a person acknowledged as holy
or virtuous and typically regarded
as being in heaven after death

last viewed (7-18-18)

Hear the Good News of last week's passage; John 3:16 from the RSV.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever
believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

My sisters and brothers we are all sinners. None of us are saints by Google's definition. We are all in need of
grace and having our debts paid. There probably aren't any saints in the room today. However, we do not
have to carry the guilt, grief, and debt of our past sins if we will lay down our lives and rededicate our hearts
to Christ this morning. The simple truth is this. Something has to die for resurrection to be possible. Jesus
Christ died to pay the price for all of our sins. Though our sins may be red as scarlet through the sacrifice and
death of Jesus Christ we are made white as snow. (pause) But what about resurrection? If Jesus' death was
sufficient to pay the price for our sins why was Jesus raised from the dead? Why is the resurrection so
important?

I need to make this very plain. The resurrection is important because we are not a crucifixion people. We are
an Easter people. Amen? **Amen.** We are a people of the empty tomb! Amen? **Amen!** United Methodists join
all of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world in our belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and
the life everlasting.

Our God is the God of the living (Luke 20:38). God is ever present; immortal. When Moses asks God whom shall
Moses say sent him, God replies, "I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). And again God tells Moses, "I AM
the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob were long since dead in their graves by the time Moses stood before the burning bush, and yet
God in that moment with Moses at the burning bush and this moment, here today, God is the God of
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – present tense – not passed tense as in God used to be their God when they were
alive. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob today. They are alive in Christ's resurrection.

The same can be said of us When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior, and the grace of justification
falls upon us like sweet summer rain all of our sins are washed into the grave of Christ's crucifixion. Then Jesus
is raised from the dead, and we are raised with Christ. Praise the Lord, we do not stay dead with our sins.
Through sanctifying grace, we are given the power to rise up out of the ashes of our sin as new creations in
Christ. When we are raised with Christ it is the start of everlasting life.

Everlasting life does not begin when our bodies die. Everlasting life begins the moment we die to sin. The moment we die to sin we become a part of everlasting life in Christ. According to the book of Revelation there is a river of life which flows from the throne of God (22:1). When we accept Jesus Christ we get caught up in the river, but to do so we have to be willing to let the past die. We have to be willing to jump in with both feet. Some may dive in. Some may cannon ball in. Some may stagger and fall into the river of life, but everlasting life is something we should all seek after. I love the way Steven Curtis Chapman describes it.

Everlasting life or eternal life is free from the chains and temptations of sin in this life and as such is filled with incomprehensible joy. Think about it this way. By a show of hands how many of y'all have ever been out on the lake? **(pause)** How many of y'all have ever been out on the lake in a boat and the engine is wide open, and the boat is going just as fast as it will go? **(pause)** How great did that feel? **(pause)** There's something about the wind blowing past and the thrill of the boat straining against the water, bopping up and down as it flies. It's wonderful. Now. How many of you have gone swimming or tubing in a river and allowed the current to just carry you down. It can be peaceful and calming. What's that old hymn?

In addition to the peace and joy beyond understanding that comes with everlasting life there is the benefit of being connected to all of those who have gone before and all of those who will come after us. We are never far from our deceased loved ones, and our loved ones who are yet to be with us when we are on our knees in prayer. We are never far from our loved ones when we search Holy Scripture for God's answers to our very real and present questions. We are never far from those we care about most when we come to God's table for Holy Communion. Through the gifts of God's grace everlasting life connects us to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. That includes the in-laws and the outlaws; the people we love, and the people at church who get on our nerves. We are supposed to be on this journey together – bound together with the cords of the Gospel that cannot be broken.

When we are focused on the upward call of God in Christ we are drawn together like the poles of a tee pee or tripod. When we get focused on something outside the Gospel the whole thing falls down. Sin tempts us to chase after what makes us happy at any given moment. The place where sin and evil cannot prevail is the good news of Jesus Christ. We've talked about happiness like a chocolate bar. We've talked about joy that passes all understanding where the sugar crash never comes. The reason God's joy lasts is because it is connected to the river of life that gives more abundant life now, and in the world to come. This is good news because it means we don't have to go from "fix," to, "fix." **(pause)** All we have to do is allow God to give God's peace to us. We have to accept God's saving grace, and then we have to want to live in the current and the flow of God's living waters. When we do we will discover new joy and peace like we've never known..

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen

"I'm diving in, I'm going deep, in
over my head I want to be
Caught in the rush, lost in the
flow, in over my head I want to go
The river's deep, the river's wide,
the river's water is alive
So sink or swim, I'm diving in"

"Dive"

Written, Performed and Recorded: Steven Curtis
Chapman ©1999

"When peace like a river,
attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast
taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul

"It's is well with my soul"

Lyric by: Horatio Spafford

Melody by: "Ville du Havre"

1873