

**HALLOWED OUT**  
**To Show the Glory of God in the Face of Christ**  
Matthew 5:1-12, 2 Corinthians 4:5-10

Early this week Carol and I carved our pumpkins for Halloween. I always like to make mine as ghoulish as possible. I want it to have a wicked leer, an evil grin, scary fangs and a nasty demeanor. Carol on the other hand tries to make a sweet, non-threatening face carving. She wants her pumpkin to have an inviting smile, warm eyes and a happy glow. So our pumpkins – kind of like some couple's votes – sort of cancel each other out. But this year squirrels came to my rescue. They nibbled on the eyes, ears and front and back of Carol's pumpkin so that her once happy pumpkin looked pretty frightful by Halloween night.

Halloween's an odd festivity. Children hide their identity by dressing up in outlandish costumes and go out in the dark of night to extort candy from willing victims. Most outlandish of all are the Jack O Lanterns, pumpkins, hollowed out and carved into grotesque faces, glowing in the dark with an evil leer from the light of a flickering candle. And I love it! It just wouldn't be Halloween for me if I didn't carve a pumpkin. There's something playful, fun and just a bit spooky about it. Psychologists would probably say it has something to do with our fear of death and the unknown. And it's true that pumpkin faces are often the stuff nightmares are made of. But putting that scary face on a big orange squash and setting it on the porch somehow helps us laugh at those fears and keep them at bay.

We celebrate a very different kind of face today, a face aglow with the love of God. For what is a saint, but someone who shows us the face of Jesus Christ? Today is All Saints Sunday. And we celebrate those who have been shining examples to us of the love of Christ. I like to think of the saints as people who have been so hollowed out through adversity, through struggle, through humility, through pouring themselves out for others... that they become opaque. The light of God shines through them and through their lives in a unique witness. Or if you'll permit me a small pun, instead of being *hollowed* out, saints are people who've been *hallowed* out (sanctified – made holy) so that God's light shines through them for all to see.

Jesus speaks of the way that God *hallows* us out in the beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. And blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake. We can be *hallowed* out – made holy – through knowing the inadequacy – the poverty – of our own resources apart from God. We are *hallowed* out through sorrowing with others and sharing their pain. We are *hallowed* out through humility, through joyous and eager devotion, through showing mercy, through purity, through working for peace, and by suffering even for a just cause.

There is a self-offering implied in each of Jesus' beatitudes, a giving ourselves away. And that's how we are *hallowed* out, made holy, by taking the risk of giving ourselves

away as Christ gave himself away for us. In that process of giving ourselves away for others we become more and more *transparent*. God's love shines through us.

I've been speaking about "saints" as a tiny select group of souls aglow with the light of Christ. And indeed we celebrate those who have been particularly wonderful examples. But the light of Christ shines in each of us. Each of us has been given that precious light to shine in our hearts. Each of us is a saint because in Christ, without our having done anything to deserve it, God has made us his own beloved, holy child. And however imperfectly we do it; each of us is called to let that light of Christ shine through us.

I think that words of St. Paul to the Christians at Corinth in 2 Cor. 4:5-10 are particularly relevant to our sainthood.

*For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as slaves (servants) for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.*

Paul speaks of the kind of adversities he faced in sharing the gospel of Christ; he was afflicted, often perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. Out of all that he was *hallowed* out so that his life would show even more clearly, Christ's love.

Paul spoke eloquently of the *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, which God has shone in each of our hearts. And of course God has shone that light in our hearts in order that it might shine through us to others. We don't proclaim ourselves, we proclaim Christ.

Paul says something else in this passage that I just love. *We have this treasure in clay jars*, I love the older translations, which read, *we have this treasure in earthen vessels*. He's saying that of course we are imperfect. Sometimes a jewelry box is almost as elegant as the jewelry it holds. But not so us. The *light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ* shines in you and me, and believe me it will be evident to others that joyous life-giving light is not of our own making but something wonderful and beyond us. That glory is contained in these human earthen vessels. It is not our virtue, our goodness, our strength, our faith that we are revealing, but God's light, God's joy, God's strength, God's love, God's goodness that by God's grace shines through us.

All Saint's Day is also a kind of reunion "of all the clan made kin by Jesus' blood." (*Barbara Brown Taylor*) There are Paul and Barnabus, Luke, Mark and Timothy who shared with the Apostle Paul in his hardships and suffering and shone with the evangelical fervor

of the Gospels. There is our patron St. John writing the gospel that bears his name. There are the multitude as spoken of by St. John the Divine from every tribe and people and language robed in white with palm branches in their hands worshipping the Lamb. There are the great Saints we remember in history – Blessed Francis, Blessed Martin Luther, Dame Julian of Norwich – and so many others who stand as great witnesses of faith in Christ. There also is the Rev. Diblee who not only served for 50 years as St. John's first rector, but who also suffered persecution as a loyalist during the Revolutionary war, but stayed on and continued to serve in a new country, who also established missions in Darien, Greenwich, north Stamford and Rye, NY. There is the Rev. William Tatlock who helped raise the funds to build this beautiful cathedral-like church and who conducted the first worship service here on All Saints Day, 1891. Here also are the shining faces in our new pictorial directory that arrived most appropriately on All Hallows Eve. Here too are the faces of those who have gone before, some of whom we will remember in prayer today.

Each of these saints – ourselves included – shine with the light of Christ that shines through them. And what does that light, to whatever degree we let it shine through us, reveal? The face of Christ, the face of love.

My friends let God *hallow* you out to shine more fully with the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May we be Jack O Lantern's in God's hands to shine with the face of Christ to our families, our friends, our neighbors, to the poor, the needy and to one another. **Amen.**