

"The Saints Are Hiding"
Text: Isaiah 26:1-4, 12-13, 19-21

ESV(Psalm 103:1-5) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, the fawn did what its mother had taught it to do. It went to ground and remained motionless in the brush and tall grass. But it was already too late. The mountain lion had already seen the fawn, had tracked its progress into the thicket and had noted that it didn't emerge. Both lay hidden, waiting.

There are very different kinds of hiding, aren't there. Both the lion and the fawn hide, but their purpose and goal are much different. The fawn hides in fear. The lion knows no fear. The fawn hides in hopes of escaping danger and surviving. The lion hides waiting only to spring.

Our text for this speaks of *saints* in hiding. Is this the hiding of the lion or the fawn? The answer is neither, for theirs is an altogether different sort of "hiding."

On this day, when we commemorate the grace of God in calling home into the Savior's embrace those saints who have gone before us, we pause to take note of the example they left us. An honest comparison between them and us may well prove very disturbing. This is a good thing, a necessary process. God never intended for his children to hide helplessly in fear. Our text will give us guidance. That text is found recorded in the Old Testament Book of Isaiah, the 26th Chapter:

ESV(Isaiah 26:1-21) In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. ² Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. ³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. ⁴ Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock ¹² O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. ¹³ O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. ¹⁹ Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. ²⁰

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. ²¹ For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

This is God's Word. Ever mindful that only the words of our God are altogether reliable, and that only his Word can create a saint, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!"** Amen.

The 1st Sunday in November is often designated by the Church as "All Saints Sunday." There is, of course, something of a danger in commemorating such a day – especially to those who were raised in a church that taught something very different about what a saint is, and what it is not. Here, as always, definitions are important – careful, precise definitions. Two church bodies can, for example, define a saint as "one who has no sin in the eyes of God." That's not nearly precise enough, because although we both begin with the same broad definition, from there we take very different paths. A saint, according to God's Word, refers to anyone, dead or alive, who believes in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Any such man, woman, or child is sinless in God's eyes, and therefore a saint – the debt for their sins having been paid in full by Jesus Christ and his perfection credited to them by faith. The Catholic Church, for example, teaches that a saint is one who "has no sin" because he or she has paid for all of their sins by their good works. They are the rare few who are therefore taken directly to heaven at death without having to suffer for a time in purgatory. Some saints in fact have so many extra good works (above and beyond what was necessary to pay for their own sins) that the people are encouraged to pray to these saints that they might credit their extra good works to the one praying – or to a dead loved one in purgatory. When it comes to saints, Catholics and Lutherans start at the same point but end up in very different places.

A note is in order here. From time to time some kind-hearted individuals express the feeling that they are uncomfortable when we seem to "bash" other churches, including the Catholic Church. The point being they would rather hear what we are for and about rather than what we are against and not about. I praise God for this spirit among us for two reasons. First, because it demonstrates a loving compassion for the individuals in false teaching churches. Second, because it tells me something about what you believe in your heart. By

this last I mean that simply telling what another church body teaches only sounds like "bashing" to someone who knows just how wrong that false teaching really is. It would be strange, for example, for a Roman Catholic to be ashamed of his own doctrine of purgatory or prayer to saints. Nor would they consider it demeaning or mean-spirited for another to reveal what Catholics are taught to believe – anymore than we would feel we are being maligned or defamed when someone says that we believe we are saved by grace through faith alone and not by works. For these reasons I am never discouraged by such comments from our members.

On the other hand, however, I pray God that we will never cease to point out in this church body not only what we are for, but also exactly what we are against. True clarity can only come from both. Hear that again. True clarity can only come from identifying both what we believe and what we reject. What we believe and teach is, in fact, often only clarified when we state the opposite, or what we reject. Most of you no doubt have firsthand experience with miscommunication because of a lack of clarity, and know that that lack of clarity was the result of failing to point out the negative or opposite – both the "this" and the "not that."

There is a story of a shipping company that routinely shipped packages that had to be opened from the top to avoid damaging the product they shipped. They were reportedly frustrated that a significant number of their customers were still opening their boxes from the bottom – this despite the fact that the top of the box was clearly marked "This Side Up." They eventually came to realize that that message only helped those who already had the box right-side-up. The problem disappeared when they added "Open Other End" or "Other Side Up" to the bottom of the box. The "Not This" was even more important than the "This." You've probably also heard, disturbingly enough, that the rather disconcerting problem of doctors accidentally amputating the wrong leg was solved by writing "Not This Leg" on the good appendage.

All this brings us back around to the rather unique thought expressed in our text regarding "saints" and "hiding." Our text draws a picture of God's saints at the end of their lives on earth. In beautiful, comforting, poetic language our text says, **"Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past."** What an awesome picture of the child of God at the end of his struggle on earth. Note well that this is neither the hiding fawn nor the crouching lion but the faithful called to their rest. They **"hide themselves"** only until the time appointed for them to be called forth from their **"chambers"** and raised to eternal life by the Lamb. So also our text says, **"For behold, the LORD is coming out from his**

place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain." The saints in heaven "hide," but they wait without fear or apprehension for God's great Day of Judgment.

God himself appoints the time when he calls his children to their special hiding chamber of peace, but that time is not now for his saints on earth. You and I are not supposed to be hiding.

Yet the pressure to do so is unrelenting. From all sides we are told to accept and tolerate. Never are we supposed to condemn, never even hint that someone else might be wrong. We have, to a certain extent, tragically bought into this nonsense. Our minds and hearts are drawn to the notion that we do those around us a *favor* by not condemning even that which will, in the end, damn them. We supposedly do the world a disservice by refusing to compromise the truth of Jesus Christ as their only Savior, the only truth that can deliver us from sin and hell. The Church seems to have taken up something of a defensive strategy, as though all we are capable of today is hiding and thereby surviving. Lost in the shuffle is the Great Commission of our Lord to **"go and make disciples of all nations... baptizing them...and teaching them."** Unfortunately the resources of our enemies and the number of combatants they can throw into the battle are without known limits. A defensive strategy isn't an option in God's Church because God has given us very different instructions.

Even beyond that, a compromising, defensive plan can never succeed. Why? Because souls are not saved through compromise. Souls are never won by toleration of damning error. No one is aided on their one path to heaven through lack of clarity. The only reason there are any saints at all in heaven today is because the Word of God was proclaimed to them, clearly and simply. They were condemned by the law and lifted to life eternal by the gospel. They were not saved by man's idea of what the Bible *should* say but by what the Bible *actually* says. God's formula for the salvation of man can never, even in the smallest way, be improved by man.

This same plan, this same awesome power, is readily available to each one of us. We have at our very fingertips the means through which the Holy Spirit *will* save souls. He himself promised through this same Prophet: **"So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."** (Isaiah 55:11)

Given this, why then do we fail so miserably to use such a weapon, which is guaranteed to succeed as God defines success, in a struggle we all care about so deeply? Is it because we doubt the effectiveness of our own witness? Maybe, but the power doesn't come from us. Is it because our weak, sinful flesh is afraid of what others might think of us? Probably. Is it because we don't really love our neighbor as we should? Most definitely. It is self-love of the very worst sort. We care more about what others might think of us here in time than we care for their eternal souls. If we held the cure for cancer we would share it – freely, joyfully, tirelessly. God's cure for the effects of sin lasts eternally. The difference is that we know mankind would be giddy with delight over a cure for cancer and would cheer us as heroes, while also knowing that many, perhaps most, would ridicule us and reject God's own cure for sin and hell. For these sins too we repent.

Consider instead that any such ridicule would last only for such a relatively short time. Our text refers to it as "the fury that will pass." This Word of God we have to share is the stuff saints are made of. It is time, high time, for us to stop hiding and start seeking. Each one of us has such a rare opportunity laid out before us. We have been given to know, from God himself, what will one day be. What is more, we have been given to know just how we will consider our time on earth when our time is over – and how the very thing we will on that day wish we had done is still there for the doing right this moment. Strengthened and empowered by your Savior Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit who lives within you, you can, from this moment onward, share the Word of God with dying souls – as you would wish you *had* done when that Last Day finally dawns. Look forward then and know what you one day will have wished you had done. There still is time. Do that right thing. Come out from your hiding place and courageously share your faith – while it is still day. Before the night comes.

In the end it's all part not of arrogance but of Christian humility. It's not about what might happen to us here on earth. It's about what *will* happen to those who die in unbelief.

On this day we thank and praise our God for the grace and eternal life given to those who have gone before us, we ask him to preserve us in that same faith, and we ask him to make us better representatives of his message of salvation through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Amen.

ESV **1 John 3:1-3** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

ESV **Matthew 5:1-12** Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ ¶ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

ESV **Isaiah 26:1-21** In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: "We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. ² Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. ³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. ⁴ Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock ¹² O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. ¹³ O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. ¹⁹ Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead. ²⁰ Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. ²¹ For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.



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All Saints Sunday – November 5, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 465 (Red Hymnal)

"Christ Is Our Cornerstone"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The First Lesson: (1 John 3:1-3) Tragically, it is not uncommon for us as Christians to take God's greatest gifts for granted. How often, for example, do we stop to consider the title that we bear, the title that God himself has assigned to us? Our first reading reminds of that title: *Children of God*. God does not know the unbelievers in this way. He is neither attentive to their needs nor listens to their requests. It is, however, exactly how he regards Christians – because of the faith he himself has created and preserves in us.

Psalm 66 (Supplement page 37) (Brown Hymnal)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 5:1-12) A saint is rightly defined as one who has no sin in God's eyes. All Christians are therefore saints, since God has placed all of our sins on Jesus and therefore sees them no more. Yet there are other characteristics of God's children of which we ought to be aware. Several were outlined by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 467 (Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)

"Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand"

The Sermon – Text: Isaiah 26:1-21 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

"The Saints Are Hiding"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 467 (Stanzas 5-7) (Red Hymnal)

"Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 473 (Stanzas 1-3, 5) (Red Hymnal)

"The Church's One Foundation"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (35) Average (43)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Class
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
	-11:30 a.m.	– Haley Strege Baby Shower

CLC News – Pastor David Reim is considering calls to the newly formed dual parish of Calvary of Marquette and St. Peter's of Iron River. Pastor Luke Bernthal is considering the call to Immanuel of Mankato.

Baby Shower – A baby shower for Haley Strege is planned for next Sunday, November 12, during the fellowship hour. See Hope Meyer for more information.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet during the fellowship hour next Sunday.

Mission Helper Trip – The 2024 CLC Mission Helper trip is scheduled to travel to East Africa. Please see the poster on the mailbox table for more information.

Church Christmas Party – The Annual Church Christmas Party has been scheduled for Saturday, December 2nd at 6:00 pm. The event is open to all, and all are encouraged to attend.

ILC Alumni Association – An effort is underway to revitalize the dormant ILC Alumni Association. Individuals to fill a variety of roles (leadership, IT, organization, etc.) are needed. Please see Pastor Roehl for contact information.