

**MORRISON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SERMON: "THEY SEE HIM AS HE IS"**  
**REV. CALVIN B. HAINES, JR.**  
**MATTHEW 5:1-12 & 1 John 3:1-3**  
**ALL SAINTS SUNDAY**  
**NOVEMBER 1, 2020**

The pastor of the church I attended in Baltimore as a teenager was a very godly man ... he was so dedicated to serving Christ and the Church so well for decades ... and he lived his faith. His name was Rev. Leonard Blight.

I was raised in the Methodist Church. My parents left the church when I was a teenager. I did not like the new church they attended. A friend invited me to his church ... Calvary Tabernacle. I liked it a lot ... the music was inspiring ... the sermon was moving ... the people were very friendly.

Pastor Blight got people involved in ministry ... quickly. When I went back the next week ... before the service Pastor Blight invited me to sit up-front next to him in the chancel-area and read the Scripture passages for the day ... [!] the second time I attended. That church became my church home.

He came from pastoring a large church in Philadelphia (that he had built-up over several years) and returned to Calvary Tabernacle, his home church, in Baltimore, when his father became too ill to continue as pastor.

The church was small in number ... about 40 or so in church every week. But, even though we had few members, Pastor Blight was a mentor to many, especially four fellow teenagers and I who attended the church. Each of us graduated in successive years in high school ... Rich, class of 76 ... Allan, 77 ... me, 78 ... Tommy, 79 ... and Lou, 80.

The pastor was instrumental in forming us spiritually ... and all of us went to Bible colleges to prepare to become pastors. I was the "black sheep" in that I went into education instead of the pastorate ... but now I'm a pastor, too.

Among his other accomplishments were establishing a ministry to homeless people and helping a group of Mexican-American folks form a new Spanish-language church. He was featured in a "Channel 13 Salute" on WJZ-TV, the local ABC affiliate, for his work in the community.

Pastor Blight passed away after a long battle with cancer. Because he always had an open door, I knew he was near the end when he would not let me drop by his house when I was back in Baltimore during the Christmas holidays. He died in January 2006.

I will never forget Pastor Blight. And, I will never be able to thank him enough for getting me on the right path to walk with God and become a disciple of Jesus.

He was not perfect ... he had his faults ... he made his share of mistakes ... but he was a man of God ... and the Holy Spirit worked greatly through him ... and he is now in the presence of the God he served so well. ... inviting (I'm sure) newcomers to sit next to him and read Scripture. And, he lives-on in the lives of the thousands of people he touched.

All of us have at least one Pastor Blight in our lives. It may not be a pastor ... it could be a Sunday School teacher ... a youth leader ... it may not be a leader of the church at all ... it could be a friend ... a family member ... a teacher ... a co-worker ... these people may not even be closely associated with a local church ... but they showed us the way to God ... they shaped us as a potter creates something beautiful out of a lump a clay.

They are "saints" in our lives, whether they are alive or dead.

They are saints in the way that Scripture uses the word translated "saint."

Have you ever noticed how the Apostle Paul begins most of his letters ...

—To the church in Rome: "To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"

...

—His first letter to the Corinthians: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..."

—The opening to Ephesians uses the word most clearly: "To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus."

Do you hear the difference in that one?

In the first two, the people are "called to be saints" ... it sounds like that may be something that happens in the future. But, for the Church in Ephesus: "To the saints" ... present tense ... they're already saints.

And that is the actual meaning in all three cases ... they are saints ... not will be saints.

When Paul talks about the followers of Jesus ... Jesus' "disciples" ... the word he most often uses is "saints." He uses it 76 times in his letters.

The Greek word is "hagios" ... literally translated, it's "holy ones."

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus himself is called "the holy one."

The word "saint" comes from "sanctus," which is the Latin version of the same word.

"Holy ones." Our denomination's founder, John Wesley, viewed the concept of "holiness," that is, "sanctification," not as being "holier than thou"/obeying a set of rules (which is how it is often taken), but it is all about the continuous transformation of the Christian's life ... the progress from self-ishness to self-lessness ... from being inwardly focused to being outwardly focused ... that is, living in *agape* love ... self-giving love.

That is our goal ... a life characterized by the two Greatest Commandments ... “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind ... and all your strength”... and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

In that Greek word, “hagios” ... “holy ones” ... lies a very important concept. To be a “holy one” means being “set apart” ... that is, the sense of being “different.” We as Christians have been “set apart” to be “different.”

Different how? Are we talking about “different” as in, [creepy] “Oh, he’s different.” There, “different” means “odd.” No, it’s not that.

Maybe we can make it clear by using Jesus’ command in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Be holy ... as your Heavenly Father is holy.” That is, “Be different as your Heavenly Father is different.”

How is God different from us? There are many ways ... but the most important attribute of God is love ... the Bible tells us, “God is love” ... his entire being ... his essence ... is love.

If that were not the case, there would be no Incarnation ... no Jesus (God in the flesh) ... no salvation ... no reconciliation to God ... no eternal life with God ... But, God so loved the world ...”

Thank God for the “saints” ... the “holy ones” ... the ones who are different as God is different ... who, like Jesus, show us the way to God.

And, for their godly work here on earth, they are rewarded.

The Beatitudes we heard today give account of some of those rewards ...

—Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

—Blessed are the meek, (that is, those who do not take advantage of their position) for they will inherit the earth.

—Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

—Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

—Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

—Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

**“Rejoice and be glad,”** Jesus says **“for your reward is great in heaven!”**

We come today in grief because our loved ones are no longer with us.

But, let us remember ...

—They live on in us. Pastor Blight and so many other saints in my life live on as I follow their example and wisdom. We keep our saints with us by living as they taught us to live ... they are with us as we are made into something beautiful from lumps of clay.

—Secondly, those saints are enjoying the rewards of their work on earth as servants of God. They are no longer in pain ... and they live in a realm ruled by love and mercy and justice. (Given the conditions under which we live right now, is that not comforting?)

—Also, our separation is temporary. I believe we will be with our saints again. The beautiful words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, (which are often read during memorial services), promise us that ... “Do not let your hearts be troubled. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” We will be reunited.

—Lastly, remember the words from the first letter of John that we heard today ... “Beloved, we are God’s children now ... what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: When he is revealed, we will be like him, for **we will see him as he is.**

As Paul writes ... “now we see Jesus in a mirror, dimly ... but then we will see him face to face. Now we know only in part ... then we will know fully, even as we have been fully known.

We look in a mirror dimly, but the saints who have gone before us ... they are like Jesus ... they see Jesus as he is. And, we will be reunited with them (I will be reunited with Pastor Blight and my mom and dad and my grandparents, my aunts and uncles ... all of The Faithful ... the Great Cloud of Witnesses that surround us) ... then we will all be like Jesus ... we will all see him as he is.

We weep for our departed saints, but we are so glad they were part of our lives ... that they shaped us ... and that they live-on in us.

One day, we will be with them again ... and we will rejoice with them as (together) we see Jesus as he is.

That is our great hope ... That is our promise from God. Let us live each day in that truth.

Amen.