

MESSAGE "All Grown Up"
November 1, 2020 All Saints' Sunday
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What do you want to be when you grow up?

It's a question that children are asked.

A question that asks for identity and definition for one's life.

It's a question that pushes children to claim what they are interested in.

Some of my earliest answers as a child included: doctor, professional golfer, president....

In later years, the question changes a bit:

"what comes next after graduation?"

what is your major?

Where do you want to work?

And other questions are thrown in as well:

When are you getting married?

Are you planning on children?

Of course there are assumptions that are a part of even asking the question.

Assumptions like how you should know at certain ages the answers to those questions.

The assumption that there is an accepted order in everyone's life.... And the assumption that people need to answer to others.

My guess is that most people's lives don't always turn out the way we have answered those questions through the years. Our interests change; marriages change or end; jobs are offered or ended unexpectedly; which sometimes leave us reeling with an identity crisis; not knowing who we are.

Leaving all those questions as a simple guessing game.

But our lesson this morning offers us a different way to think about what we are going to be when we grow up. Not defined by questions of occupation, that is what we do, but rather defined by a relationship and who we are.

1 John 3:1-3

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

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John was writing to his community that was experiencing some fall-out and a bit of an identity crisis. That early Christian community was not always understood; not necessarily accepted and they were experiencing that some were leaving the community in disagreement over Christ. They needed some reassurance of who they were – which

John reminds them: you are God's children.

Being named as God's children – gives an identity

Who we are defined not by what we do, but by a relationship

*Tell the story of my last name.....*

That last name has been my identity for over 27 years.....which is defined by a relationship. That name identified who I am.

The same is true in our baptism when we take the identifying marker of Christian which is defined by a relationship with God.

As we celebrate All Saints' Day, we remember that saints are those who have lived into that relationship with God; lived into that identification.

John makes it clear to that community that they are God's *children*; and that proclamation also claims that there's something more to come; a future; a becoming....he writes: what we shall be has not yet been revealed....evidently there's a moving forward a something more to come.

Saints are those who actively continue becoming ....

In our Methodist tradition, we have come to understand that being saved is both something that has happened and something that is happening.

We call that ongoing growth of becoming Sanctification; literally, being made holy. And it is not a complete work when we accept Christ. Rather, accepting Christ as Savior is the beginning of that journey and that journey leads us forward.

*I've experienced that. Not necessarily in knowing more which I have over the years, but in loving more; in learning to forgive better; in judging less; in serving better; in trusting more fully; it's been a growth process....an ongoing revealing of ourselves in Christ.*

Which leads me back to where we began: "what do you want to be when you grow up?" What if we looked to John's writing here to help us answer that question.

To live as God's child.

To be sanctified; to live an increasingly holy life.

To fully live into my identity as Christian

To be like Christ.

John wrote it like this: But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Today we celebrate and remember those who have gone on and now see Christ as he is and have completed that journey of becoming and now rest from their labors. Those you lit your candles for.

And we are encouraged to keep living into our identity and keep moving forward on our journey. Let's pray:

I'm going to lead us in a prayer that has been a part of the Christian tradition for many years and handed down to us from those who came before us in the faith:

*Almighty God, you have knit together your children into one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of your Son, Christ our Lord. Grant us grace so to follow your holy saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which you have prepared for those who sincerely love you, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*