

Friday, October 31, 2008

Dear Saints,

Today is an important day in Church history. First, as protestants we remember that it was on October 31st, 1517 that Martin Luther nailed the Ninety Five Theses to the church door in Germany and started a few pebbles down the snowy mountainside to create a Reformation avalanche. This is Reformation Day! If you want to be refreshed on the major themes of the Reformation, I encourage you to read through the [Five Solas of the Reformation](#).

Second, as part of the congregation of All Saints Presbyterian, we should note that this is the Eve of All Saints day, the Church Calendar date bearing our congregation's identity. All Saints day was celebrated as early as 270 A.D. to commemorate all of the martyrs and faithful departed of the Christian Church, as we sing, "For all the saints who from their labors rest..."

Thirdly, as catholic Christians (part of the One universal Church), this is a date that became a celebration enacting in festal colors the victory of God.

James Jordan writes:

"Halloween" is simply a contraction for All Hallows' Eve. The word "hallow" means "saint," in that "hallow" is just an alternative form of the word "holy" ("hallowed be Thy name"). All Saints' Day is November 1. It is the celebration of the victory of the saints in union with Christ. The observance of various celebrations of All Saints arose in the late 300s, and these were united and fixed on November 1 in the late 700s. The origin of All Saints Day and of All Saints Eve in Mediterranean Christianity had nothing to do with Celtic Druidism or the Church's fight against Druidism...The concept, as dramatized in Christian custom, is quite simple: On October 31, the demonic realm tries one last time to achieve victory, but is banished by the joy of the Kingdom. What is the means by which the demonic realm is vanquished? In a word: mockery. Satan's great sin (and our great sin) is pride. Thus, to drive Satan from us we ridicule him. This is why the custom arose of portraying Satan in a ridiculous red suit with horns and a tail. Nobody thinks the devil really looks like this; the Bible teaches that he is the fallen Arch-Cherub. Rather, the idea is to ridicule him because he has lost the battle with Jesus and he no longer has power over us. (see the full article here: <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com/open-book/no-28-concerning-halloween/>)

This represents a deeper Christian interpretation of the vulgar and commercial holiday Halloween has become. Don't get me wrong, I am not calling for everyone to embrace Halloween or go to "Jason's Wood" or a "Haunted House" - please! It is a tainted event today. But we ought to be informed that as distasteful as so much of Halloween is today, there is something behind it which shows the influence of the gospel.

This interpretation is sadly forgotten by Christians today who only here secularists and pagans story that this is really a Pagan Revival. Halloween is at best what I would call, Yuppie Paganism in some of its manifestations. That is, a paganism which has been bleached by the gospel. My guess is that the reason America has no sense of the deeper Christian roots is because of the New England Puritans, who axed (no pun intended) the Church Calendar and permitted the complete secularization of the calendar.

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As you know the Strawbridge's will be at Trinity Presbyterian Church (CREC), Valparaiso, Florida on Sunday. I will preach on The Word and Music from Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 2 Our family will be sharing some music in the evening and then taking a few days in a more godly climate. If you want to read the notes, they are here:

[Music & the Revealed Word](#)
[Covenant Inclusion in Ephesians 2](#)

Rev. Dr. Glen Knecht (of Christ Reformed Evangelical in Annapolis) will be preaching at All Saints on Nov. 2. Dr. Knecht is a dear elder brother in the ministry who served First Presbyterian Columbia SC when I was in seminary. He also had a special connection to Ukraine and was delighted to spend the afternoon with Vitaliy and me two weeks ago.

PRAYER, EVENTS & CALENDAR

- **Continue to pray and serve Sarah Albrecht** (post surgery) as the Albrecht's prepare for their move to Japan.
- **Psalm-Sing - November 14** (Friday, meal is at 5:30, singing 6:30-8:00) at MCC.
- **Malcolm (and Elsbeth) West** - Malcolm is being trained to be a driver for a commander (still dangerous but not as much as his previous assignment). Malcolm is having a lot of opportunity to interact with soldiers and evangelize. Pray for him. Elsbeth is due in November (first child). Malcolm is training at Camp Shelby (near Hattiesburg, MS), then to Iraq in January.
- **Women's Bible Study on Revelation:** 8 am at the Strawbridge home, November 8 (cancelled on Nov. 22, due to my presenting a paper at a conference, Evangelical Theological Society).
- **Men's Study** - Tomorrow at Oregon Dairy on (Saturday, November 1 and 15th) 7 am. We will be continuing in 1 Timothy 3-4 (related to leadership development)
- **Congregation-Wide Events**
 - **Parish meals in October** as you are able.
 - **Psalmsing** on November 14 - see attached flyer.
 - **Christmas Tree breakfast (Saturday 8 am, Nov. 29)** at the MCC dining hall (Akron).
 - **Advent Lessons and Carol Service** - Sunday, December 14 (4 p.m.) at First Reformed Church - If you would like to sing in the choir for this event please contact Debi Long. Rehearsal will begin Wednesday, Nov. 5 (7 pm) at the Long's.

WEBSITE AND RESOURCES

New Church Calendar: <http://www.allsaintspresbyterian.com/calendar.aspx>

All the sermons are online and available, as well as others, here:

<http://www.wordmp3.com/ministry/?id=allsaints>

Gregg Strawbridge, Pastor