



SERMON IDEAS

BE A TRUE SAINT

By Rob Fairly

SCRIPTURES

- Psalm 78:6
- Matthew 22:36-40
- Romans 12:6-8
- II Corinthians 9:6-15



Know what November 1, 1966, was? All Saints Day. It is especially remembered in Louisiana because the National Football League awarded its 16th franchise to New Orleans on that date. No surprise– the team was named the “Saints.”

The first team included three future Hall of Famers, Paul Hornung, LSU great Jim Taylor, and defensive end Doug Atkins. The average attendance per game was a remarkable 75,463 that first season, in Tulane Stadium.

But they did not win a lot. Archie Manning was the quarterback in the late ‘70s when they went 1-15. The fans started wearing paper bags over their heads and called the team the “Aints.” Earl Campbell and Mike Ditka weren’t able to change things, but the fans kept coming. Their faithful support kept the team playing.

Ever thought of yourself as a saint?

We place the concept of sainthood on an elevated moral pedestal. We like to think of saints as heroes, right? Is that because it absolves us of responsibility? Those kinds of Saints are out of touch with real lives. What does a Saint know about paying the mortgage on time? What hero ever had a flat tire, or has gone through a divorce or was diagnosed with cancer? Saints don’t know what real life is like.

This is what we tell ourselves to keep a safe distance from sainthood. But the original use of the term “saints,” particularly by Paul, was meant to indicate all the faithful gathered to worship God.

Today is not just about mystic heroes of the faith. This is not “Some Saints Day.” This is “All Saints Day.” We celebrate those who keep our church serving.



Scripturally speaking, the “saints” are the body of Christ. We Christians are saints by our connection with Jesus Christ. Those who call Jesus the Christ are called saints, and those who claim Jesus as God’s way for the world are set apart to live the Jesus way. It is a different way of living.

The Bible is full of guidance about how the people of God are called to live. The Bible mentions prayer 289 times, love 363 times, and giving 1,043 times. God has put a tremendous emphasis on giving in His word. Why? Because we are naturally selfish as we worry about the future, so giving is hard for us. But God challenges us to give. Give our time, our talents, our money– to be generous. to keep ministry going.

There is a close relationship between faith and generosity. When we trust in God, truly trust, we can act boldly. Abraham is the ultimate example of acting on his faith, even to the point of sacrificing his son. God provided him something else to sacrifice.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of generosity in terms of sowing and reaping. Andy Stanley, author of what I think is one of the best books on generosity, *Fields of Gold*, calls it the Law of the Harvest.

- 1) We reap after we sow. We don’t plant a seed and look for a plant the next day. It takes water, sunshine and time. So it is with our generosity.
- 2) We reap more than we sow. Plant an apple seed– that yields an apple tree. That apple tree produces apples that all have many seeds in them.
- 3) We reap in proportion to what we sow. “Remember this from II Corinthians: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” There is a correlation between how much we give and how many blessings are produced.

I go to a downtown First Church. For almost 200 years people have worshipped God there. Like many, my family sits in the same pew each week as we have for decades. There is a plaque on the end of the pew celebrating the person whose financial gift made that comfortable pew possible. It is not our family name.

I never knew him. Back when money was truly hard to come by, his generosity made sure my family had a welcoming place to come hear about God and the way we are supposed to live. He was a true saint. He left a legacy.





The people we are remembering today lived differently. They did not put themselves first, they put God and others first. They did not all leave a legacy of a pew, but some of them did leave other financial legacies.

These people served us, taught us, encouraged us, showed mercy to many of us and gave. They gave during their lives and they gave at the end of their journey so that this community of saints could continue to serve the cause of Christ after their lifetimes.

We can too. Do you have a will? You should, for your family's sake. And you could leave a legacy of faith by leaving a financial gift after you no longer need it, to support your favorite ministry.

What money we spend down here on Earth– in some sense, is lost forever. The money we give to God's purposes, the seed we sow into God's work has eternal results. The harvest may come later, but it will be multiplied.

Have you thought about your legacy? On future All Saints Days after your lifetime, how will you be remembered? Do something now to make an impact on the next generation of the church.

Be a true saint.



Rob Fairly retired in 2021 as president and CEO of the United Methodist Foundation of Louisiana, where his primary role was to guide churches in their planned giving efforts. He and his wife Pam are long-time members of First United Methodist Church of Baton Rouge.

