

FOR ALL THE SAINTS

(Ephesians 1:11-23)

Intro: This week I received an email.

- It began:
 - #"Hello."
 - #"Are you still alive?"
 - #"If yes reply immediately."
- Who would send me such an email?
 - #High school classmate?
 - #Member of the St. Louis County Jail Alumni Association?
 - #Bill collector?
 - #One of my sons?
 - #One of you?
- Actually, it came from Dr. Abul Nazir.
 - #Whom I had never heard of before Thursday.
 - #Who told me that his secretary has a check for me.
 - *In the amount of \$4.7 million.
 - #I should:
 - *Call.
 - *Email.
 - +To guarantee safe delivery of my money.

Most of the time.

- I simply delete these.
 - #Unless I need a sermon illustration.
 - #I know they're a scam.
 - *I know they're after a bank account.
 - +Not to funnel money in.
 - +But to drain money out.

One time when I was still at the St. Louis County Jail.

- I received so many of these nuisance emails.
- I asked our IT (Information Technology) person.
 - #If anyone ever investigated these emails.
 - *I had seen a piece on *60 Minutes*.
 - +On how the FBI:
 - =Had traced many of these to Nigeria.
 - =Had set up a sting operation.
 - To arrest the people responsible for these.
 - *I would gladly have shared my spam with the FBI.

#Our IT person told me:
 *No.
 *It was too much trouble.
 -So one day I got the "bright" idea.
 #Saving all of these.
 #Forwarding them one to another.
 *Lo and behold someone was paying attention.
 +REJIS.
 =Regional Justice Information System.
 -In St. Louis.
 +Monitoring the email activity.
 =In the St. Louis County internet system.
 +Wondered why I had so much email activity going to Nigeria.
 =They thought maybe my computer had been hijacked.
 -For some kind of international plot.
 *So my naïve attempt:
 +To discourage the spam.
 +To get rid of the nuisance.
 =Seen as a nuisance.
 -By the-powers-that-be.
 -So now I just delete.

I. God Sends Us A Message On This All Saints Sunday.

A. All Saints Day.

1. November 1.
 - a. In the church's calendar.
2. Originally recognized all the unnamed martyrs.
 - a. Those who had been killed.
 - Because of their faith.
 - b. Who didn't have a day named in their honor.
 - Like:
 - #St. Andrew.
 - *November 30.
 - #St. Thomas.
 - *December 21.
 - #St. Stephen.
 - *December 26
 - #St. John.
 - *December 27.
 - #Holy Innocents.
 - *December 28.

- c. November 2.
 - All Souls Day.
 - #Recognize everybody else.
 - 3. Martin Luther and the Reformation changed things.
 - a. Luther saw all the baptized as saints.
 - Saints and sinners at the same time.
 - But saints nonetheless.
 - #What are saints?
 - *Except forgiven sinners.
 - #In the Apostles' Creed.
 - *In one breath we confess our faith in:
 - +Communion of saints.
 - *In the very next breath we confess our faith in:
 - +Forgiveness of sins.
 - *That's as it should be.
 - b. All Saints Day.
 - Became a day to remember all of the faithful departed.
 - #Especially those who had died in the last year.
 - In our prayers this morning.
 - #We want to:
 - *Remember.
 - *Name.
 - +Shirley Bryant.
 - =Who died on June 4, 2010.
 - +All those whom you wish to:
 - =Remember.
 - =Name.
- B. But God Is Also Sending A Message To Us Living Saints.
 - 1. Similar to my email.
 - a. Hello.
 - b. Are you still alive?
 - c. If yes, reply immediately.
 - 2. It's not:
 - a. Spam.
 - b. Scam.
 - c. Nuisance.
 - 3. It's an extraordinary offer.
 - a. Faith.
 - b. Forgiveness.
 - c. Eternal life.
 - Sent from:
 - #Heart of God.
 - #Cross of Christ.

- Delivered.
 - #By the Holy Spirit.
 - #To the eyes of our heart (Ephesians 1:18).
 - *Through the Word:
 - +Enfleshed in Jesus.
 - +Written in Scripture.
 - +Proclaimed among us.
 - *Through the waters of Holy Baptism.
 - *Through the bread and wine.
 - +Of the Holy Meal.

II. How Shall We Reply?

A. Do We Hit The Delete Button?

1. Some do.
 - a. Last Sunday's *Tulsa World*.
 - Had an article entitled:
 - #The God Gap: Walking Away from Church.
 - Percentage of young adults (age 18-29).
 - #In this country.
 - #Claiming no religious affiliation.
 - *10% in 1990.
 - *27% today.
 - b. Interesting challenge.
 - As we begin our small group meetings.
 - #Rekindle the Fire.
 - To create a vision for the future of this congregation.
2. Dr. Abul Nazir complains in his email to me:
 - a. "I sent you many mails."
 - b. "But all bounced back."
3. When God tries to speak to us.
 - a. In whatever venue.
 - Personal devotions.
 - Bible study.
 - Worship.
 - Another person.
 - b. Do they all bounce back?
 - c. Do we just hit the delete button?
 - We're too busy.
 - We've got too much other stuff going on.
 - We have data overload.

B. Do We Claim Our Inheritance?

1. Jesus died so that we might receive our inheritance as children of God.
 - a. My dad is dying.
 - I know that.
 - b. I'm in his will.
 - I know that.
 - c. But he has to die.
 - Before:
 - #My brother.
 - #My sister.
 - #I.
 - *Will inherit anything.
 - Jesus died on a cross.
 - #So that we might receive our inheritance.
 - *As children of God.
 - d. Will there be anything left to inherit when my dad dies?
 - He has some savings.
 - Those savings are being used to pay his nursing home expenses.
 - #As it should be.
 - #It's his money.
 - *That's one of the reasons:
 - +He worked.
 - +He saved.
 - If it all needs to be spent to pay for his care.
 - #It all needs to be spent to pay for his care.
 - I'm not worried about it.
 - #I won't starve.
 - #My brother won't starve.
 - #My sister won't starve.
 - We'll inherit the leftovers.
 - #If there are any.
2. Jesus doesn't offer us leftovers.
 - a. He offers us a place in the kingdom.
 - Kingdom of God.
 - Kingdom of Heaven.
 - b. I received another email recently.
 - It's not a new story.
 - #I've heard it before.
 - #I've told it before.
 - Forrest Gump died and went to heaven.
 - #When he got to the Pearly Gates.
 - *St. Peter told him:
 - +Heaven was getting full.
 - +He'd have to pass an entrance exam to get in.

#Test consisted of three questions.

*What two days of the week begin with the letter T?

*How many seconds are there in a year?

*What is God's first name?

#Forrest answered the first question:

*"That's easy."

+ "Today and tomorrow."

*St. Peter said:

+ "That isn't the answer I had in mind."

+ "But I can't say that you're wrong."

+ "So I'll have to give you credit for that."

#Forrest answered the second question:

*"That's easy, too."

+ "12."

*St. Peter said:

+ "How do you figure there are 12 seconds in a year?"

*Forrest said:

+ "That's easy."

= "2nd of January."

= "2nd of February."

= "2nd of March."

*St. Peter said:

+ "That isn't the answer I had in mind, either."

+ "But, again, I can't say that you're wrong."

+ "So I'll have to give you credit for that."

#Forrest answered the third question:

*"Andy."

*St Peter said:

+ "Andy?"

+ "Where did you get the idea that God's name is Andy?"

*Forrest said:

+ "Well, from that old hymn we used to sing."

+ "Andy walks with me,"

+ "Andy talks with me,"

+ "Andy tells me I am his own."

c. We don't have to worry.

-Heaven will be full.

-There will be a "No Vacancy" sign.

#Because:

*Shirley Bryant.

*Forrest Gump.

+God the last spot.

d. There will be a place for all of us.

-Who claim our inheritance through faith in Jesus.

#No further entrance exam will be required.

C. Do We Live To The Praise Of God's Glory?

1. Sainthood:

- a. Not simply for:
 - Next life.
 - Next world.
- b. It's for:
 - Here.
 - Now.
 - Already.

2. Living to the praise of God's glory.

- a. I think about that question in Job 1:9.
 - “Will a person fear God for nothing?”
 - “Will a person serve God for nothing?”
 - “Will a person serve God for God's sake?”
 - #Not because of what's in it for me.
 - #But because God is God.
 - *That is living to the praise of God's glory.
- b. I think about the Book of Faith moments.
 - We had before some of our merger meetings with Bethany.
 - #We would read a Scripture.
 - #We would each be invited to comment.
 - *On how that Scripture spoke to us.
 - So many times we would say:
 - #“It's not about us.”
 - #“It's about God.”
 - *What God has done.
 - *What God is doing.
 - *What God has in store for the future.
 - All too often we turned around and acted:
 - #Like it was all about us.
 - To live to the praise of God's glory.
 - #Remember:
 - *It's not all about us.
 - +How much money we raised.
 - =At the dessert auction.
 - Although for a good cause.
 - +How many walkers we had.
 - =At the CROP walk.
 - Although for another good cause.
 - *It's about what God has done:
 - +For us. +For the world.
 - =Through Jesus Christ.
 - =Through us.
 - Living to the praise of God's glory.

3. Dying for the praise of God's glory.
 - a. Couple weeks ago.
 - My brother:
 - #Flew:
 - *From Maryland.
 - *To Milwaukee.
 - +To spend a couple of days with my dad.
 - #Asked him how he was doing.
 - Dad said:
 - #"Terrible."
 - My brother said:
 - #"What's making today so terrible?"
 - My dad said:
 - #"Because the Lord hasn't called me home yet."
 - This man.
 - #Who has lived his life to the praise of God's glory.
 - #One day.
 - *Sooner or later.
 - *Going to die for the praise of God's glory.
 - b. Jesus.
 - Lived.
 - Died.
 - Was raised.
 - #To the praise of God's glory.

Concl: On this All Saints Day.

- We remember all the saints.
 - #Who have lived.
 - #Who have died.
 - #Who have been raised.
 - *To the praise of God's glory.
- We have an email from God.
 - #Hello.
 - #Are you still alive?
 - #If yes, reply immediately.