

# All Saints Sunday

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Preacher: Rev. Daniel Avitan

[ 0 : 00 ] Human societies have never been a monolith in terms of ideas and religion. There have always been multiple and often conflicting belief systems that have been tolerated so long as they are subservient to the prevailing religion or philosophy.

So, example, in ancient Rome, there were many different religions, but there was only one state religion that was connected to the gods and the cult of Caesar. But the other religions, the other ones that were on the periphery, were tolerated unless they messed with the temple economy or with peace or the sacredness of Caesar.

In many Muslim countries today and throughout history, there have been Christians and Jews that have been tolerated so long as they pay a tax and ensure that their churches or synagogues or places of worship are not higher than the local mosques, and especially if proselytizing doesn't happen, evangelizing doesn't happen.

And here in the post-Christian West, we seem to tolerate all religions only if they are kept private. They remain in a closeted state not to infringe upon our individualism and expressive personhood. Or, to put it another way, as long as your religion doesn't interfere with me living my truth. So the idea of living one's truth, by and large, has been seen as a positive idea in our day.

[ 1 : 42 ] Folks who may have been excluded or marginalized or don't find themselves fitting can find, in a sense, meaning and belonging that would be elusive otherwise.

But the problem with living your truth, as it often is expressed, causes people to ignore the truth. Truth becomes relativized.

This moral compromise due to moral relativism seeps in and allows this permissibility of all things as long as it allows me to reach my goal.

As long as I have happiness or perceived happiness or people look at me as a happy or fulfilled person. In many ways, this is the folk religion of our day.

And the reason why all religions are tolerated as long as they don't infringe upon me living my truth is because living my truth is, in fact, our state religion.

[ 2 : 51 ] Peter and John will be arrested. If you remember last week, this man, he was a lame beggar from birth. Acts chapter 3, he was at the beautiful gate begging for money.

And Peter and John walk by him. He's looking for coins. Peter and John get his gaze, look at him, and command him in the name of Jesus to rise up and walk. And he certainly does.

Peter takes the opportunity to proclaim that it wasn't by his hand, but Christ who healed the man. In fact, Jesus, whom you crucified, he says to the people, in ignorance along with your leaders, he bids you to repent.

And by the way, if you repent and turn to him, your sins will be blotted out. You will have times of refreshing, it says, and then there will be a promise of the return of Christ to right all wrongs.

This is what we learned about last week in Acts chapter 3. Well, Acts chapter 4 begins with them being arrested for this very act. They will be interrogated.

[ 3 : 57 ] And yet in this interrogation, they will be bold as well as they proclaim that there is no other name by which salvation can come apart from Christ.

But they're not arrested by just any old group. It is by the Sanhedrin, the religious and civic leaders of their time. In fact, it's going to be by the hand of the very people that arrested and sought the crucifixion of Christ.

Peter's sermon that he will preach to these people will obliterate the idea of living your truth.

Something that was incredibly provocative in his day, but it also is incredibly provocative in our day as well.

But Peter doesn't simply tear down something without offering a better option, because he certainly does that. In fact, he will proclaim the gospel of Christ to the Sanhedrin, and they will be left with a decision to make.

What Peter will do is he will proclaim the truth, not a truth. If Peter is correct, then moral relativism is completely wrong.

[ 5 : 19 ] And if Peter is correct, then other religious traditions that do not confess Christ as Savior and Lord are wrong. And if Peter is correct, then the ethos that informs much of our political and cultural leaders in this post-Christian Canada, they're wrong.

Not just wrong in the here and now, but eternally wrong. So this is a hot take. This is a hot take. But the scriptures tell us that it is true, and that it is good news for us today.

So our commitment to the scriptures is to always walk towards the difficult passages, the uncomfortable passages. And this morning, we'll break our text into three sections, asking the question, how does the gospel of Christ free us from living our truth?

So before we jump into it, let me pray and ask the Lord's blessing. Lord, we come to your word this morning, and we ask that you help us to come to it humbly. Lord, that we would be curious people, the curiosity that leads to truth.

And by your Holy Spirit, that you would open our eyes if they need opening. Lord, help us to receive if we are struggling to receive. We pray this in Christ's name.

[ 6 : 39 ] Amen. So I alluded to the arrest. Let's read it. Acts chapter 4, verses 1 to 6. And as they were speaking to the people, that is the apostles, Peter and John, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

If you remember, the Sadducees were this Jewish sect that did not believe in the resurrection at all. They had their power base in the temple. They were a very powerful group.

In addition to the Sadducees, there were priests as well and scribes, people that would comprise this Sanhedrin, this ruling body.

Let's continue reading. Verse 3. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed and the number of the men came to about 5,000.

So 3,000 from the Pentecost sermon. Not sure how much time has elapsed between then and Acts chapter 3, but another 2,000. It says men.

[ 7 : 52 ] Presumably there were more. But here Luke tells us that 5,000 people have come to faith, if not more, since the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Verse 5 and 6. On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, that's his son-in-law, and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high priestly family.

The religious and civic leaders and authorities, they have heard this proclamation of Christ rising from the grave, and they are greatly annoyed.

They're greatly annoyed because they are people that are in power and this message threatens that. So we'll pick up in verse 7 and we'll look first at our first point.

I didn't tell you guys my points. That's a bit of a faux pas. So we'll look at the first point and the first point is the good news of the name of Christ. So we'll look at verse 7 to 12.

[ 9 : 00 ] We'll start in verse 7 here. And when they had set them, that is Peter and John, in their midst, they inquired, by what power or by what name did you do this?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. Much like in Mark chapter 2, if you remember the story of the paralytic who was lowered through the roof, who was healed by Jesus, much like the paralytic who was healed in a way to proclaim the divinity of Jesus, so too the healing of the lame beggar in Acts 3 testifies to Jesus' power and authority over all things as the conqueror of death and the redeemer of mankind.

I mean, wonderful that the man got healed. We find out at the end of this section, in verse 22, it was 40 years, good for that guy. I'm not downplaying it. But it was used, in a sense, to proclaim that this Christ, this Jesus, has risen from the grave and all authority is his.

So, in a sense, the crippled man is not a prop, so to speak, but a means by which Christ's power and authority is testified. In fact, Peter says that Jesus is the chief cornerstone, the very foundation upon which all of salvation rests.

[10:56] Christ is the only one who could win salvation, for he alone could both atone for the sins of the world and offer new life. He is fully man and fully God, and in the incarnation, he bridges the gap between sinful humanity and the perfect, all-powerful God.

This is what Jesus does. Verse 12 hammers this home all the more. This is what it says, and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

There's no other name. That's what they say. No other system of belief, no amount of financial or career success, no amount of charitable giving, no amount of good, important self-help, no other vision of utopia, no other religion, no other truth, no other Savior, nothing under the sun apart from Christ can win us salvation.

That's what Peter is saying. Very provocative thing to say. He's saying to the Sanhedrin, all of the hard work, in a sense, that you have done to secure your family as a high priestly family in the temple, all of the hard work you've done to consolidate your power, to know the Scriptures inside and out, to devote your life to it, it's not going to save you.

Only the name of Christ can bring salvation. This is an uncomfortable truth for a city like ours, is it not? Ours is a city made up of multiple religions, multiple spiritualities, multiple belief systems.

[12:41] So to say that it is only Jesus' name and no other, I mean, that's a very uncomfortable thing to say. I maybe caution you from going around and just blurting it out everywhere, tact is an important aspect of being a respectable human being, but nevertheless, there is only one name that brings salvation.

So to say that, in a sense, it's only Jesus' name is to claim that everything else that claims salvation or some kind of salvific end or some kind of utopia like heaven is false.

but as uncomfortable as this is, it's still very good news. How?

To say that there is no hope of salvation apart from Christ is to recognize that although humanity is capable of great things, it's this doctrine of common grace, it's very important.

Humanity's capable of many great things. The one thing that we are incapable of is solving the problem of evil, the prevalence of disease and death and the problem of sin and shame.

[13:55] We are incapable of solving this problem. We put balm on it. We deal with the symptoms and that's not a bad thing necessarily, but we can't deal with the root issue.

We just can't get clear of these things no matter how hard we try, no matter how ingenious our innovations are, we can't conquer the unconquerable. The idea isn't unique to Christianity.

Other faiths can recognize this, that there's a big problem in a sense. Maybe they think that they see it as a glaring issue.

There's some similarities. However, only Christianity contends that the solution for this unconquerable issue does not reside in us, in our willpower, our strength, our ability to pull up our bootstraps, to manifest it if we speak it into the universe.

We cannot do it and only Christianity contends that salvation must be from Christ alone. And this salvation in a sense is this marriage between justice and mercy.

[15:07] It's an expression of God's divine love and only something that God himself can do so that God, the Son of God, he unites himself to mankind in the person of Jesus, fully man and fully God so that in Christ all the justice is poured out on mankind as our representative, fully man.

And all of the mercy that ought to be extended in a sense to us is given. That we get the place of Christ even though we don't deserve it.

Friends, this is called the doctrine of grace. This is what Peter is referring to when he calls Christ the chief cornerstone. And he's the chief cornerstone because he can withstand the weight of our sin and our fear and our self-righteousness and the pride that bubbles up inside of us every single day.

Imagine a home whose foundation is made of reinforced concrete with rebar, the best materials, for that foundation. It's built strong and to last.

In many ways this building is a testament to a good foundation. It has lasted. The capstone says 1888. It's capable of withstanding many tons of material, many years of wear.

[16:27] And consider a foundation that's built of and I'm trying to think of something that is brittle, like the most brittle. Imagine a foundation that is made of dried angel hair pasta.

Is there something more brittle? One brick, the thing, crack, crack, crack, crack, crack, it's done, it's gone. Our best efforts, our best attempts at perfect religion and modern visions of utopia brought about by our own hand are as capable of extending eternal salvation to us as the angel hair foundation is capable of supporting brick and mortar.

Christ and Christ alone is the cornerstone. He is the foundation. He is the only one that can withstand life.

He is the only one who can extend salvation. This is what Peter is sharing with the religious establishment. The very ones who control religious life in Jerusalem and all of Israel.

Peter isn't just exposing them in a sense to how misguided they are. He's not just tearing down their worldview but he is inviting them into the truth to trust in Christ, the hope of Israel, the prophesied Messiah that they would have heard about and read about and in a sense devoted their life to seeing.

[17:48] And if you remember in Acts chapter 3 Peter, speaking to the crowd, said that the crowd crucified Jesus and their leaders but it was done in ignorance.

That's what he says. I believe it's verse 16 of Acts chapter 3. It was done in ignorance. Well now they know and now they have proof in a sense because this man is standing right there.

Who else can heal a man that everybody in the temple precinct would have known? 40 years crippled, how long he was begging, now he's standing there and he's strong. How can they deny it? And Peter and John are attributing it to Jesus because he rose from the dead because he's the creator of life because this man is also God and salvation has come.

They're not ignorant anymore, are they? They're not ignorant anymore, are they? Verse 13 and 14 says this, Now when they, that is, the members of the council or the Sanhedrin, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men, they were astonished and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

[19:03] But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. What will they do? This brings us to the second point, the problem of pride.

If the members of the Sanhedrin were to believe in Christ, it would undoubtedly mean a loss of their prestige. It would mean that they would have to admit that they were wrong in putting Christ to death because you don't crucify the Messiah.

They would have to, in a sense, lose their standing in the community, their perks, their money, everything, in a sense, that they held dear, not to mention that their religious and civic duties would likely cease to be.

It would cost them a lot. No more kickbacks, no more honor. Instead, they would have to follow the leadership of these uneducated commoners. Whether or not they could read, I mean, it's flip a coin, maybe, maybe not.

Unlikely that these fishermen could read. They would likely have heard the Bible read, maybe they could. The text doesn't say it, it just says that they are uneducated commoners.

[20:23] But Jesus chose them, he saved them, he chose them, and he chose them also to lead his church. And in a sense, worse than all of the things that they would have to lose, they would have to follow those guys.

These were the religious and civic elites, these were the educated folk, and they would have to follow fishermen from the Galilee. If you remember in Acts chapter 2, they were made fun of because they were Galileans, they're low status, and yet these are the people that we would have to follow, let alone follow Christ who we had crucified.

So what did they do? Let's look at verse 15 to 18. But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, saying, What shall we do with these men?

For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. This little bit from verse 15 to 18, it helps us to understand a very important truth.

[ 21 : 48 ] Unbelief is not an issue merely of considering facts and then making decisions, weighing truth and lies or likelihoods or rationality.

Unbelief isn't an issue of just confronting, in a sense, our presuppositions. But rather, unbelief is the decision to forsake Christ and hold fast to one's belief and way of life.

The evidence is here. These are educated people. Maybe they would have known the scriptures that would have said, in a sense, when the Messiah would come, that the lame would walk.

Or they would know that Jesus would open the eyes of the blind and remember the scriptures that prophesied the blind would see. Or they would have in their minds the four servant songs of Isaiah culminating in Isaiah 53, that it pleased God to pour out his wrath on his servant.

They have the evidence and yet evidence is not enough. Evidence is important. It's very important. Many people have come to faith through excellent ministries of apologetics, looking at the legitimacy of the Bible and the facts on the ground of the eyewitnesses of the resurrection of the Christ.

[ 23 : 22 ] But facts clearly aren't enough. unbelief here is the decision to forsake Christ and hold fast to one's beliefs, one's worldview and way of life, to remain on, in a sense, the throne of our own little mini-kingdom, to not let Christ himself take his rightful spot.

Unbelief is the result of pride and it's a dangerous, dangerous thing. If the Sanhedrin, like I mentioned, admitted that Jesus was truly the Messiah, they would admit, have to admit to take the blame and put Christ on the cross.

But if they did that, they would have understood that this was God's plan all along and that forgiveness was offered to them if they would have only repented.

But they would have had to eat crow. They would have had to take a humble position. They would lose the things that they held on to. You see, unbelief is a result of pride, primarily.

They do not understand the grandeur and the great benefit of God and especially not in Jesus Christ for all they see is loss. It's loss. It costs too much.

[ 24 : 34 ] I will not, it might even sound good, but I'm not going to go for it because I'm going to lose too much. I'm going to have to confess too much. Do we not struggle with this kind of unbelief?

Do we not, as Christians, in a sense, want to submit our lives to Christ and to follow him, but there's a pride that wells up in us that says, surely he's not good enough.

Whatever I will lose, he will not give me more. He will not fulfill me in the ways that I need to be fulfilled. If I confess my sins, I will be exposed as a sinner.

Friends, this is my heart. This is what's going on inside of your pastor. I'm sure it's going on inside of you. There's a pride that is inherent in humanity.

We struggle with unbelief. It's because of pride. We may think Jesus is a great leader and a moral authority, but if he isn't the Christ, then he is nothing and has no claim on our lives.

[ 25 : 45 ] But if he is, friends, he requires everything. That is hard. And it is a hard thing, especially if we are enjoying the bliss and benefit of false saviors.

Not bad things, but things that are improperly ordered in our lives, that take precedent, that take priority over Christ. But these things are momentary and fleeting, and I'll tell you, according to the scriptures, and I'm sure if we had a time of testimony, people could stand up and share.

Whatever you have lost for Christ, where you say in humility, by God's strength, I'm giving this to you, has he not given you abundantly more than whatever you have lost?

And once again, friends, it is hard, we understand this, but I want to share with you another religious leader who, unlike the Sanhedrin, encountered Christ and laid his life down for his Savior. And this is the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3, 4 to 11. This is what he says, Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

[ 27 : 06 ] Here's his religious credentials. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law of Pharisee, as to zeal, a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law, blameless, but whatever gain I had I counted as lost for the sake of Christ.

Verse 8, Indeed I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteous, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Verse 8, Indeed I count everything as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Whatever you lose, you gain in Christ because you are now connected to the very one who created everything and it does not have an expiry date.

It doesn't rust, it doesn't grow mold, your relationship with Christ is eternal. His grip on you is way stronger than your grip on him and he will not let you go.

[ 28 : 42 ] Pride is a killer for it ignores the truth but if we receive the message with humility ours is the kingdom. It really truly is.

So how then do we overcome our pride? How does Peter, John, and now we see the Apostle Paul, how do they say yes to Christ even though it costs them greatly but the members of the Sanhedrin they say no at their eternal peril.

This is the last point. This is the spirit of truth. Look with me. At the text once more, verse 18 and following. So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God you must judge for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

And when they had further threatened them they let them go finding no way to punish them because of the people for all were praising God for what had happened. Look at that boldness.

[ 29 : 49 ] You judge whether it is right for us to listen to you or God Peter says to them. That takes some chutzpah that takes some real boldness.

But we must remember this is the same Peter okay just pause for a second think about this. Peter and John are before the entire religious establishment and they are saying listen if it's between you or God I'm listening to God.

This is the same Peter who a few weeks prior couldn't muster up enough courage to confront and stand for Christ in the face of a servant girl in the high priest's courtyard.

How on earth is this the same person? How does Peter have this kind of boldness? Remember this isn't just the scary Sanhedrin who has a lot of power this is the scary Sanhedrin that crucified Christ. Would they be crucified as well? I mean we have the second part of chapter 4 we know that they don't get crucified but what would stop the Sanhedrin from stringing these guys up as well?

[ 31 : 06 ] They had no idea what was going to happen yet we see this incredible boldness confidence so much so that it says that the leaders were astonished what accounts for this change?

Verse 7 if you want to turn back verses 7 and 8 it says this and when they had set them in the midst they inquired by what power or by what name did you do this?

Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to them and then he goes on the act of coming to faith is a gift of God himself and when that happens the Holy Spirit sets up shop inside of our very soul resides inside of us enlivening us to grow in our love and affection of Christ teaching us truth properly ordering the other good things in our lives in such a way that they don't impede on the throne of Christ in our lives we begin to live rightly ordered lives and it means that our lives begin to live according to truth truthful living becomes a thing of the Christian not perfectly we grow in this but the Holy Spirit given to us gives us great confidence in the truth so that we can be bold in the face of opposition so that we can take hold of Christ when the other things in our lives that are jockeying for the throne of our heart seem wonderful and good but we know that

Christ is better Jesus said that the Holy Spirit actually is the spirit of truth and he says it in John 16 verse 13 and following when the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth why how for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come this is what happened to the church at Pentecost bearing fruit in Peter so that this coward became this bold proclaimer of the resurrection friends it's it's our reality as well we will fight pride if we look to God and ask him for strength we say in a sense to God's word I'm choosing to believe you God help my unbelief and we will see growth because he has promised as much that we walk in the truth he is going to help us to walk in the truth

Christ says in John chapter 8 that the truth will set you free that there is freedom awaiting us that we can walk in so to wrap things up to live according to the truth of God that there is no other salvation under heaven by which we may be saved is good news and it is a life of freedom and it is a life of truth let us by God's spirit see our pride grow smaller and smaller and let us trust in the risen Lord

Jesus Christ for only in him and through him we can be saved let us pray Lord we thank you for the boldness of your saints Peter and John and Lord help us to remember that that same Holy Spirit that you gave them at Pentecost is residing in all of us who have confessed faith and trust in you [ 34 : 47 ] Lord refresh us this morning give us great confidence in your word this morning help us to be bold and to trust that your ways are always the right ways and that all the other ways do not lead to truth but they lead to lies and confusion and ultimately to their end damnation but Lord you have promised to hold fast to your people and Lord we cling to that promise this morning thank you for your blessed son thank you for his name by which we can be saved amen if you have children now is the time to collect them