Bible Study 101

Nov. 1, 2023

 “The Holy Spirit”

All Saints Day…. A day in which the churches celebrate all those who lived a good and holy life but do not make it onto the Church Calendar of feasts. Many go on to say that this is a feast for the faithful, the worker, the baptized and in many ways the laity who make up the working, ministering church of Jesus Christ.

Surprising then that the eve of All Saints, or All Hallows, as it used to be called, has become a major sales pitch for businesses. Halloween with witches, broomsticks, bats, vampires, the undead, monsters, and everything creepy, has far outpaced the Holy Day.

Many, if not most, who celebrate Halloween, have no clue as to its origins or that November 1 is All Saints. Yet All Saints should encourage us all in our church life. Not that we aspire to wear halo or embrace the monastic life, but that we continue to live the Gospel life that Jesus taught us. Yesterday we talked about a ‘Life in the Spirit.’ What we meant by that can be gleaned from Jesus’ own words and teaching.

He instructs his disciples that he must leave them, but that he will leave them a guide, comforter, in the shape of the Holy Spirit who will teach them ‘in all truth.’ Christian theology teaches that when Jesus dies on the cross, it releases the Holy Spirit into the world and it in the Spirit who is our strength. It is the Holy Spirit at Pentecost who transforms the Apostles from quivering frightened men into strong proclaimers of the Gospel and really evangelists who go out and build Christ’s church.

Nowhere better is this illustrated than in the person of Peter who from denying Christ three times becomes the leader, speaker and takes on Christ’s role as the teacher of others. We learn in the Acts of the Apostles that the early Christians recognize when someone has a gift or charism. They gather and lay hands upon them, praying that the Holy Spirit enters them and enhances that gift for the benefit of the Gospel and the community. This today we call “The Laying on of hands.” It is often accompanied with administering the Holy Oils.

We are not expected to take up the cross, and ministry of Jesus unaided. He tells us that the Spirit will do that for us. He will give us words, prayer, strength and the gifts to accomplish that in which we would otherwise struggle. Many find it easy to believe that Luke Skywalker can tap into the Powers of the Force, yet the Christians believed and practiced it first. Not some mythical force in the Universe but the Force of the God in whom they believed.

When we gather for an ordination, it is the Bishop and all the clergy who lay hands on the candidate. No words are spoken. The oils are anointing the hands. It is a consecration of the Holy Spirit. It is a repeat of the consecration of baptism. In truth it is a call to all Christians.

We will study the Coming of the Spirt. Amen