

Carol's Reflection:

One of my favourite hymns is often played and sung at this time of year – especially when All Saint's Day falls on a Sunday.

The music is by Ralph Vaughan Williams – For All the Saints. It is a grand hymn, and played on organ or piano, with the full sound of the congregation and choir joining together – it is enough to raise the rafters right off the Sanctuary roof!

That grand tune found new words in the 1980's written by Shirley Erena Murray. Shirley was a New Zealander who celebrated the gifts of the world, and the call to live with respect in creation.

To the tune of 'For all the Saints' came 'Give Thanks for Life' she wrote:

Give thanks for those who made their life a light
Caught from the Christ-flame bursting through the night,
Who touched the truth, who burned for what is right,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

To touch the truth and to let it burn within you – motivating all you say and do is a part of the message of the Gospel.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is in the Temple in Jerusalem. He is there to teach. The crowds gather around him, he has just answered the question of the greatest commandment. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Now Jesus points out the importance of integrity. If you say it, mean it, and do it. Remember, you are beloved children of God. And, you are called to live your love for God and to love your neighbour.

The Biblical letter of James will say it as "Be doers of the word and not hearers only." Those are words taught by saint-like leaders to generations of young Explorer Group girls as their motto.

As an aside, TMUC people have nurtured children through many youth programs – sharing a light of Christ that continues to burn in hearts and minds and makes this world a better place – to those leaders then, and the leaders now, we are so deeply grateful.

Back to the Gospel – these teaching of Jesus – in Jerusalem, as betrayal and death are hanging over him are pivotal. These teachings are a foundation for living. When we let those words guide us, and we make choices to care for others – essentially to serve others – then we are making our life a light. We are following Jesus. We are living love.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote: The saints are the sinners who keep on trying.

Nothing is easy these days. It is tough to be living in this pandemic. Many of us miss the routines of what was otherwise a regular part of life. We miss gathering as a church community. We miss visiting one another in our homes. We miss being able to linger with friends and family around a table, or, or, or...

And yet we have to keep trying. We have to find new ways to connect, and to live the Gospel. Our love for each other feeds each other. We have to let our light shine – maybe it is with a phone call, or a letter, or an email, or a text, or a kindness to a masked stranger checking us out of the grocery store, or a donation of socks, or money, or food, or ... we just have to keep trying.

We are beloved children of God. On All Saint's Sunday, let's remember that nothing ever separates us from God's love. And, when we let the Christ-flame burn within us, we are giving a gift of hope and love to our hurting world.

And for our own, our living and our dead,
Thanks for the love by which our life is fed,
A love not changed by time or death or dread,
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

Thanks be to God – for you and for all the saints.