

Message: *Saints and Souls*

May God's Grace and peace be with you this day!

Hear again these words from Paul 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15: *'brothers and sisters know this: you are loved by God... you are chosen... you are saved... so stand firm and hold on... You are enough ... and are called to be a messenger of hope. May Christ encourage your heart and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.'*

Paul's words to the Thessalonians, to the Ephesians, and to us are important words of prayer-filled hope. Perhaps the clear take-away from these words is found in that one word... hope. For in this word is the essence of God's kin-dom... there is One who is above all powers, above all authority, above all things in heaven and on earth; the One who was , and is, and is to come; the One who came for us, walked and talked with us, lived and died for us, and rose from the dead, to ascend to heaven; and the One who promises to come again for us. In him is strength and encouragement for our hearts.

This is the word... hope... that is essential to hear, to remember, to recall... when life gets hard, when trials come, when our spirit is tested.

The prophet Isaiah tells us over and over, as does Jesus, 'do not fear; do not be afraid'. Thanks be to Paul for these words of strength and encouragement.

Today The first Sunday in November, we celebrate, with many throughout the world, one of the certain challenges in life, the light of those family & friends who have passed from earthly life to eternal life.

It's no mistake that this recognition occurs as the daylight hours significantly shorten.

Grieving the pain and loss of a loved one is hard to bear. The waves of grief wash over us... sometimes tickling our toes, chillin' our ankles, and sometimes knocking us off our feet. Grief is real and present... whether the loss occurred recently or more than twenty years ago.

So our annual celebration of the departed must have a greater purpose than re-living the pain and loss and grief. Indeed it does!

This day is a day of celebration with all those who've gone before us and are now with us, and all who are yet to be with us that our God is God of us all and we will be gathered together in the communion of Saints of God's Kin-dom!

This day reminds us that God is at work in us, through us, and has plans for us.

Our part in God's work starts with understanding how much God has done for us. Today's reading reminds us that God loves us, God has chosen us, God has saved us. God has called us and given us eternal comfort and a good hope. This hope should motivate us to get down to business in response.

Paul outlines two big responsibilities: first, God calls us to stand firm and hold on to the gospel... We have to remain rooted in faith. But our work is more than just staying committed. God also calls us to do and say what is good. We bear witness to our hope by our words *and* actions, strengthened by God all the way.

Let us celebrate that God's kin-dom reigns in our hearts and hope encourages and strengthens us.

Amen.