



See the Hope Set Before You

Scripture Reading: Revelation 21:1-6a

When canoeing, I've always aimed toward landmarks ahead to keep me moving in the right direction. Doing so keeps me on track, encourages me as I see my progress, and gives me a sense of accomplishment as I reach the landmarks, even as I pick out new goals to keep me moving forward.

Of course, the aim of ending the day in the beauty and safety of a good campsite was what motivated me to pick out and work on those smaller, interim goals. I usually knew about that ultimate aim only from what others I trusted had written on a map. What they'd put down on paper gave me the vision of a hoped-for reality that I wouldn't be able to experience until the day's journey was done. Yet, that vision, based on the testimony of others who had passed this way before, gave me the confidence and courage to weather, well, all kinds of weather and all kinds of challenges.

This coming Sunday, we celebrate All Saints Sunday. In doing so, we take time to remember those who have run this race, or to stick with my metaphor, canoed this course before us. We give thanks that they lived their lives with confidence in the One who ran the race before them, the One who urged the Apostle John to write down the ultimate vision we are aiming for. "See," John writes in Revelation 21:3, "the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more..."

That word, "see" is one that John writes again and again. We need to see, at least in the eyes of our hearts and minds, the vision that God sets before us. It gives us hope and courage and direction. "See, I am making all things new." Like our forebearers in faith, we need to see the vision and lay ahold of the hope that is ours. It is with that ultimate hope in mind that we endure the hardships along the way. It is with that aim in mind that we pick out the interim, passing goals of each day, seeking ever to make progress toward God's call. With our inward eyes focused on our long-term vision, we labor as we await its fulfillment with confident hope.

The Apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:58, after writing fifty-seven verses expounding on the hope-full implications of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." All Saints is an important celebration for us. We give thanks for those who lived and loved and labored in faith in the Lord before us. We give thanks that God's joyful promises to them are now fulfilled. And we are invited, yet again, to dedicate ourselves to living lives of such faith. With God's promised vision in mind, may we live and love and labor with confidence and courage as we move ever-toward the journey's end and the reality of that great Day of rejoicing.

Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God, we praise you. We thank you for those who have lived this life in faith before us. We thank you for their witness and encouragement. We thank you that the faith we celebrate is not simply our own, but a gift freely given us and entrusted to us. Forgive us for too often taking this gift for granted. Forgive us for not living out our faith and sharing our faith as we ought. By your grace, encouraged by such a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and even now surround us,

enable us to faithfully follow the path set out for us by our Lord Jesus Christ and to generously share the love and faith that others have shared with us in your name. Amen.

Memory and Meditation Verse:

Revelation 21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
“See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.”

Some Things to Try:

- List and give thanks for those who have been a blessing to you in the past twenty-four hours, the past week, the past year, and/or through the years.
- List and give thanks for those who have been particularly significant teachers or mentors for you in your faith and in living the life God calls you to live.
- Tell someone about a person who has gone on from this life who encouraged you in your faith and life.
- Take time each day this week to read a passage of Scripture that proclaims the hope that is ours through Jesus. (see suggestions below)
- Take time, maybe spacing this out over several days, to prayerfully consider the hope that is yours/ours because Jesus:
 - Came to earth (is Emmanuel, was born a baby, lived among us...)
 - Died
 - Was raised
 - Ascended to the right hand of God the Father
 - Will come again

Additional Scriptures:

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 24

John 11:32-44

1 Corinthians 15

Revelation 7:9-17