All Saints' Sunday's Sermon

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

November 2, 2025

The Reverend David E. Fox

All Saints Sunday (Year C) 2025
Ephesians 1.11-23

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Suppose for a moment that tomorrow a young doctor discovers the cure for cancer. We would rejoice at such world-changing news! Yet, even with the discovery in hand, cancer would still exist. Why? Because the cure would first need to be tested, verified, and approved. Research teams would have to study its effects, governments and health agencies would have to regulate and distribute it, and pharmaceutical companies would need time to produce it safely and in sufficient quantity. Doctors would then need to learn about the discovery and how to apply it correctly. Hospitals would need to prepare, communities would need to be informed, and patients would need to come—one by one—to receive the treatment.

And even then, not everyone would have equal access. Some might not trust the new cure, others might delay seeking help, and in some parts of the world, the medicine might take years to arrive. So cancer would remain until everyone—not just the scientists and doctors, but all of us—made it our shared mission to ensure that the cure reaches every person who needs it and to live as if healing were truly possible.

Thousands of years ago, God had a remedy to cure the world. God sent God's son, Jesus, into the world. But like that cancer cure, the remedy of salvation needed to be shared, distributed, and made known to every person who needed it. And that's where the saints come in—both those who have gone before us and those of us gathered here today.

In our reading from Ephesians, Paul reveals God's eternal plan for sharing this cure: "In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit."

Notice the beautiful progression here. First, we were destined—chosen by God for a purpose. This wasn't random; it was part of God's eternal plan. Second, we heard the word of truth. Someone shared the gospel with us. Third, we believed. And finally, we were marked with the Holy Spirit as God's own.

Let's dig a little to see what Paul means by "inheritance." In the ancient world, an inheritance wasn't just about receiving property—it was about identity, belonging, and responsibility. When Paul says we have "obtained an inheritance," he's declaring that we are now full heirs with Christ

himself. Romans 8:17 confirms this: "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." We don't just receive something from God; we receive everything that belongs to Christ—his righteousness, his relationship with the Father, his mission, and his eternal glory.

This inheritance also carries responsibility. As heirs, we become stewards of God's kingdom. Just as earthly heirs are expected to continue the family legacy, we who have inherited Christ's mission are called to continue his work of reconciliation and healing in the world.

The "sealing" with the Holy Spirit is equally profound. In Paul's time, a seal marked ownership, authenticity, and protection. When documents were sealed, they were guaranteed genuine and protected from tampering. When goods were sealed, everyone knew who owned them. The Holy Spirit's sealing means God has marked us as authentic children, protected us from spiritual harm, and guaranteed our future inheritance. But more than that—the Spirit within us is what Paul calls the "down payment" or "guarantee" of our inheritance. The same power that will raise us to eternal life is already at work in us now, empowering us to live as God's representatives and share his cure with the world.

Today we celebrate All Saints, and so we remember the saints who brought the cure to us. Think about it—how did you first hear about Jesus? Was it a parent who read you Bible stories? A Sunday school teacher who showed you God's love? A friend who invited you to church? A pastor who baptized you? A confirmation instructor who helped you understand your faith?

These are the saints who made sure the news of a cure reached you. They were part of God's distribution network. They were the doctors and nurses who made sure the medicine got to you.

In our congregation, we can trace this chain of faithful witnesses. Generations of saints have worshipped in this place, shared their faith in this community, and passed down the good news to their children and neighbors. The cure of Christ's love didn't just magically appear in our hearts—it came through the faithful witness of ordinary people who took seriously their calling to share what they had received.

Some of these saints are now with the Lord, but their witness continues to bear fruit in our lives. Others are still among us, continuing to live out their calling to share the cure with anyone who needs it.

Now comes the challenge: it's our turn to be sharing saints. Just as those faithful witnesses brought the cure to us, Christ is calling us to be part of his distribution network today.

Just look around our neighborhoods. We live in a middle-class community where people are dealing with real struggles—broken relationships, anxiety about the future, loneliness, addiction, grief, struggling to pay rent or the mortgage; and within these neighborhoods that surround us is a deep spiritual hunger that material success can't satisfy. They need the cure that we have received – the love and salvation of Jesus the Christ.

But here's the thing—just like that cancer cure, the gospel won't distribute itself. It requires willing participants. It requires us to live as if healing is truly possible, to share our hope with others, and to invite them into the community of faith where they can experience God's love for themselves.

This doesn't mean we all need to become street preachers or door-to-door evangelists. It means we live our faith authentically; we share our stories when appropriate; we invite people to join us in

worship; and we show Christ's love through our actions. We become the kind of people others want to know more about because they see something different in us—the peace, joy, and hope that comes from knowing we are loved by God.

The Holy Spirit, who has sealed us as God's own, is actively working through us right now to reach others. Our job is to be available, to be faithful, and to trust that God will use our witness in ways we may never fully understand.

Brothers and sisters, the difference between a hypothetical medical cure and the gospel is this: Christ's cure is already proven, already approved, and already available. The research is complete, the testing is done, and the results are guaranteed. What we have in Jesus isn't experimental—it's the real thing.

But just like that hypothetical cure for cancer, it still needs distributors. And here's the amazing truth: Christ is actively working through us today to spread his healing. Right now, as we sit in this sanctuary, Jesus is preparing us to be his hands and feet in this community. The same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is living in us, empowering us to share the cure with others.

Our response isn't to create the cure—Jesus already did that. Our response isn't to prove the cure works—the empty tomb already did that. Our response is simply to trust Christ's work in us and through us, and to make ourselves available as part of his distribution network.

When we leave here today, we're not just going back to our regular lives. We're going out as saints—ordinary people through whom Christ wants to do extraordinary things. We're going out as distributors of the cure, carrying with us the hope that can heal broken hearts, restore broken relationships, and bring eternal life to those who are spiritually dying.

The saints who shared the gospel with us are now cheering us on from the great cloud of witnesses. And Christ himself is working through us today, using our words, our actions, and our love to reach people who desperately need what we have received.

Let me close with an old legend that was shared by Barclay. "Jesus went back to heaven after his time on earth. Even in heaven he bore upon him the marks of the Cross. Then angels were talking to him and Gabriel said: "Master, you must have suffered terribly for [people] down there." "I did," said Jesus. "And," said Gabriel, "do they all know about how you loved them and what you did for them?" "O no," said Jesus, "Not yet. Just now only a few people in Palestine know." Gabriel asked, "What have you done to let everyone know about it?" Jesus said: "I have asked Peter and James and John and a few others to make it the business of their lives to tell others about me, and the others still others, and yet others, until the farthest person on the widest circle know what I have done." Gabriel looked very doubtful, for he knew well [how people continually failed to keep their covenants made with God.] "Yes," he said, "but what if Peter and James and John grow tired? What if the people who come after them forget? What if away down in the [twenty-first] century people just don't tell others about you? Haven't you made any other plans?" To which Jesus answered: "I haven't made any other plans. *I'm counting on them.*"

Christ is counting on you.