

Gospel lesson

We jump ahead a chapter in the Gospel of Mark, coming to an encounter in the temple in Jerusalem during Holy Week: right after Jesus explained to the Sadducees that there is life after death, for our Lord “is God **not** of the dead, but of the living”:



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-authority/>; credit: LUMO

Mark 12:28-34

(NRSV)

²⁸ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;

³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

³¹ The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other';

³³ and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all

the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,' --this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

The word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "We Are the Church">

UMH #558 vv. 1,2,4>

Message: The Home of God



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-home-of-god/all-saints-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/all-saints-sunday-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Eternal God of those who **have** walked the Earth,
who **do** walk the Earth, and

who have **yet** to walk the Earth,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may remember and honor those who went before us and live as You would have us live. Amen.

For this All Saints Sunday we consider “The Home of God”:

“All Saints is ... an acknowledgement of the gaps left behind by those we have loved and lost in the past year and longer. But it is also a celebration of the promise of eternity and the sense that even those we no longer see in the flesh are still a part of the foundation of our faith.”¹

<Interactive Time>



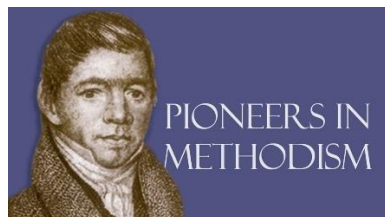
picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/pensive-grandmother-with-granddaughter-having-interesting-conversation-while-cooking-together-in-light-modern-kitchen-3768146/>;
credit: Andrea Piacquadio

Who taught you about God’s love? <Let them respond>

Did they only show it in church? <Let them respond>

In how many ways might God’s love be shown?
<Let them respond>

This is All Saints Sunday; it is also Native American Heritage Month. Do you know anyone who fits both categories? <Let them respond>



picture from <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-pioneers-in-methodism-william-apes>

[William Apess](#) was a Pequot who lived in the early

¹ Theme summary taken from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-home-of-god>.

1800s. He was the first Native American licensed to preach by American Methodists, described as “perhaps the most successful activist on behalf of Native American rights in the antebellum United States.”^{2,3}

Who do you think would call him a saint, and why?

<Let them respond>

Who would deny Apess sainthood, and why?

<Let them respond>

Life is full of issues and people affecting how you deal with them. For me, saints enable us to see the possibilities God offers us, through legacy and deeds of faith. Most I love well; some I may resent a bit but need their influence on my life to help me (and perhaps society as a whole) to grow closer to God.

The psalmist mentions people in society who need help – prisoners, blind, hungry, oppressed/bowed down, orphans, and widows. Naomi and her daughters-in-law were widows, with no means of support or protection.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jvh-ruth/>;
credit: Jan van 't Hoff

Destitute, Naomi returned to God, leaving behind Moabite lands and customs. Because of the bond of love they shared, Ruth left her native land and its

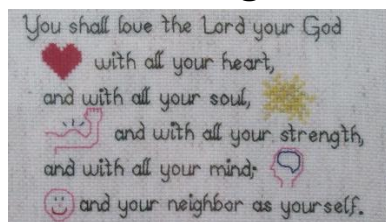
² <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-pioneers-in-methodism-william-apess>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Apess#cite_note-Bizzell-2

deities, choosing life with Naomi and the Israelites instead, including faithful worship of God.

We will hear next week how Ruth's faith choice was rewarded with a place among the people as one of their matriarchs, but do not forget it was Naomi's love and faith that brought her to that place. I think Naomi was a saint in Ruth's life.

Who have you inspired with your love and faith, that they may look upon you as a saint in their lives? Are you an effective link in the chain of faithful people sharing love through the ages in God's kingdom?



picture from MMMS collection

Sharing love is important: so important, that the greatest commandment is to love God – the Creator of everything, who needs nothing. We are to love God with **all** that we are and have. The second greatest commandment is to love one another, as equals.

God showed us that love in Jesus, who constantly put choices in front of people: choices demonstrating what they love, with clarity about what shows [the love of God and people] versus [the love of money and power]. Jesus showed that God is not interested in what we can destroy in the name of our faith; blood sacrifices and ashes do not build the kingdom of God.

It is through love and nurture that we find life! Yet, people seem to forget that when caught up in the details of our worldly existence. So many people are afflicted by sin: hungry, oppressed, prisoners of fear (don't talk the election this week!), alienated and isolated - while greedy, prideful, and domineering predators ravage their lives economically and emotionally, let alone physically.

Especially in this era of information overload, we lose sight of what is important because of hyped minutiae. Jesus makes it simple and clear for us: God offers relief from sin and renewal of life, a better way forward, with a simple focus of love.

Love of God enables love of ourselves because God loves us already. Secure that we are loved, we are able to reach out in love to serve the needs of the world, beginning with those around us. We thus generate more love and more resources for living life to the fullest, a home for God's kingdom on Earth.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-home-of-god/all-saints-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/all-saints-sunday-year-b-graphics>

So this week, I ask you to work on your relationship with God. How did you unplug from media or connect with God, as I asked you to do last week? How do you see God showing love for you?

Look at the saints/your loved ones who have gone before. What was it about them that makes them so special to you? Where or how do you see that God worked through them? Use that knowledge to work on your relationships with others. Ask yourself:

- † How have you affirmed someone else recently?
- † Where have you fallen short of sharing God's love?
- † What do you most want to change, and how can showing holy love enable that?

Then go and live as the saints did, as Jesus calls us to, and enable people to see God's home on Earth by knowing you. It is election week: As the votes are counted, remember that we are called to war on sin, not on each other. Let God's holy love enable fulfilled lives, because whatever the outcome for leadership of this country, God is our one true king.