

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



October 31, 2021

HALLOW

What do we honor?

by Drew Downs

Hallow is not a word we use often, even in church, though most of us say it daily. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Outside of the Lord's Prayer, we're not likely to use it.

The word *hallow* means to honor as holy. So, we honor God's *name* as holy. What else then do we hallow? For one, we hallow the saints, those people the church lifts up to honor and remember.

This time of year, as we prepare to celebrate *Halloween*, All Saints, and All Souls, it is easy to see how we honor God, the official saints, and those whom we love. But what/who else do we honor?

There are many people, institutions, and places we hallow: treating, not only with honor, but as *holy*. We might not use the word, but I have little doubt that we do it. The question is what *should* be hallowed?

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

This year, we get the fortune of having All Hallows' Eve land on a Sunday. This, of course, is the holiday we know as Halloween.



While we know Halloween as the day we dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating, All Hallows' Eve marks the evening before All Saints' Day, one of our principal feasts.

It also marks the beginning of a kind of fall version of the Triduum, in which we celebrate from sundown on the first day through two successive days of holy remembering: All Hallows' Eve, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day.

In All Saints', we celebrate by hallowing the saints - those people of faith the church has raised up and named as holy. Then, we would celebrate the following day, *all* those who have died. Not just the sainted, but the lowly, the loved and unloved. In a sense, it is our recognition that it isn't just the best that need to be honored: we *all* need to be honored.

Since the medieval period, Halloween has been our opportunity to laugh at death, and reveal it as something less than the holiness of God.

Spook and play this weekend. We will celebrate the saints and the souls next week. But take a moment to think about how it all fits together. And that you, those you love, and those all over the world, are never far from the love of God.

Drew+

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FOR SUNDAY

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost

October 31, 2021

Collect

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reading

From Mark 12:28-34

"When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God.""

Reflection

When Jesus is asked what is the greatest commandment, his response is to recite a prayer.

Jesus takes a ridiculous question asked earnestly and gives an equally earnest response.

First, the question is academic and legalistic. It sounds like any number of questions about the nature of God, of creation, and the metaphysical makeup of the cosmos. The sort of thing scholars write long, boring papers about using words like eschaton and ontological.

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But this question also sounds kind of arbitrary; as in which is the best flavor of M&Ms or which is the greatest Harry Potter book.

Jesus's response is quite curious given the *legalistic* character of the question and its impossibly arbitrary concern for picking one essential among a host that are also all essential.

Jesus doesn't give a textbook answer. In fact, he doesn't so much *answer* as *respond*. He says a prayer. The most familiar and famous prayer to their people: the Sh'ma.

The Sh'ma was the prayer they prayed every day. They would know the prayer in their bones. It is much like our relationship to The Lord's Prayer.

In seminary, we might describe this as responding to a Systematic Theology question with Practical Theology. The question (which is the greatest? – like the disciples arguing along the way, eh?) is located in the head and demands logic, consistency of thought, and the certainty of a systemic thought process.

Jesus responds by praying. An act that requires the whole body, not just the mind. It evokes emotion and memory, anticipates our needs and focus, and compels us to connect with our tradition, our practice, and our community.

Jesus's response is remarkable. But it isn't the only remarkable response. The scribe not only commends Jesus, but reasons out *the logical conclusion of Jesus's response*. Jesus then commends the scribe for *that* response. Not because he is *right* intellectually, but because the scribe demonstrates that his whole self aligns with the Kin-dom work Jesus is doing.

We're not supposed to seek to be *right* but to be *whole*.

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