November 1, 2026 – 1 John 3:1-3

All Saints Day is a day of hope. A day in which we confess our hope that our loved ones are with the Lord. A day in which we confess our hope that though we are sinners, we have also been made saints by our baptism into Jesus Christ, just as little Haidyn was earlier. A day in which we confess our hope of the resurrection, when saints below and saints above join together in a great multitude before the throne of the Lamb.

All Saints Day is a day of hope. And we need this day of hope because, as Christians, our hope is constantly under attack.

Our hope is attacked by the world around us. The apostle John knew a lot about the persecutions that Christians suffer for their hope, as did the church that he was writing to. The world did not recognize them as God's children because it did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. It rejected them just as it rejected Christ. It sought their death just as it cried out for Jesus' death.

The same is still true today. In some parts of the world, Christians are imprisoned, tortured, and killed for their faith. Even here, where we enjoy the freedom to worship openly, the world often treats Christian faith as foolishness, dismissing the promises of God as wishful thinking and the resurrection as a comforting fairy tale. The world tells us that death is the end and that whatever happiness we can find in this life is all we can expect.

And yet, it's not just the world around us that attacks our hope. Our hope is also attacked by our own sinful flesh. We know God's promises are true, yet we chase after fleeting pleasures that leave us empty and wanting. We pursue possessions, recognition, and success as though these things could give us the peace we lack. We become so occupied with the blessings of this life that we forget the eternal blessings God has promised.

And when trouble comes, as it inevitably will, our flesh draws us away from His Word into doubt and despair. We wonder whether God really loves us and whether His promises will hold when we need them most. We know that Christ has conquered death, but we still fear the grave. We know that we have been forgiven, but we continue to carry the guilt of our sins.

Of course, our flesh doesn't always come up with these ideas alone. Behind these attacks stands the devil, the accuser of God's people. He tempts us to sin, assuring us that we can get away with it and that God's Word need not concern us. Then, once we have sinned, he turns around and accuses us.

He reminds us of our failures and tells us that we are too sinful for God to love. When we grieve, he whispers that God has abandoned us. When we face death, he insists that there is nothing beyond the grave. His purpose is to leave us without hope, either by convincing us that we don't need God's forgiveness or by convincing us that His forgiveness can't possibly be for us.

If we look within ourselves for hope, we'll never find it. Neither the world nor our flesh can give us lasting hope, and the devil is bent on snatching what we have away from us. If our hope depends on what we find apart from Christ, we have every reason to despair.

But that's exactly why John begins our text with these amazing words: *"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."* When we look to ourselves, we see our sin and weakness. When we look to Christ, we see the love of God, the forgiveness of our sins, and the promise of everlasting life.

Just look at what the Father has given us, he writes. The love of God isn't a vague feeling or a general wish for our happiness. It's the concrete gift of God's Son. The Father sent Jesus into this world to bear our sins, suffer our punishment, and die in our place. The One who had no sin became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. He carried our guilt to the cross. He rose from the dead. And in Him sin has been atoned for. Death has been defeated. The devil's accusations have been silenced.

This is the love the Father has given us. A love we have neither earned or deserved, but given entirely by grace, through the saving work of Jesus Christ. When our sins trouble our conscience, we look to the cross. And when death threatens to overwhelm us with grief, we look to the empty tomb. For there we see the love of God that will not abandon us, even in death.

"Beloved, we are God's children now." This is the second great foundation for our hope: who we are in Jesus Christ. As we saw this morning, through Holy Baptism, God has placed His name upon us, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He has united us to Christ, washed away our sins, and made us His own children and heirs of everlasting life.

The world may not recognize us as God's children. We may not always recognize it ourselves when the mirror of the Law shines back on us. But God's Word declares it, and His Word is more certain than anything we see or feel. As we'll soon proclaim in one of our communion hymns: "God's own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ."

And this is especially important on All Saints Day. We don't remember the faithful departed because they earned their way into heaven by being better than everyone else. We remember sinners who were washed in the blood of the Lamb, forgiven for Jesus' sake, and preserved in the faith.

Their hope was not in their own righteousness, and neither is ours. Their hope was in Jesus Christ, who claimed them as His own in Baptism and sustained them through His Word and Sacraments. That same Christ has claimed us. The saints who have gone before us and the saints who remain here are united in the same Lord, washed in the same blood, and sustained by the same promises. We are one body in Jesus Christ.

Yet John doesn't pretend that we already experience the fullness of what God has promised. He writes, *"Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared."* We don't yet see the glory God has promised His children. But John tells us what we can know: *"When he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."*

And that's our third reason for hope: who we will become when Christ appears again. On that day, He will raise our bodies from the grave and make us like Himself. Just as Christ rose bodily from the dead, never again to die, so He will raise us. Just as Christ is free from sin, death, and every consequence of the fall, so we will be freed from them forever.

The sin that clings to us now will trouble us no more. The suffering and weakness of our bodies will be gone. The grave will no longer claim those whom Christ has redeemed. We will see our Savior face to face, and we will be like Him.

So don't let the world, your sinful flesh, or the devil rob you of the hope that is yours in Jesus Christ. When your conscience accuses you, remember that Christ has died for your sins. When your heart doubts God's promises, remember that in Baptism He has called you as His child. When you stand beside the grave of someone you love, remember that the tomb of Jesus is empty. The same Lord who died and rose for you will return to raise you and all the faithful departed. He will make you like Himself, pure and holy, never again to suffer or die.

Until that day, we live by faith in what God has promised, even when we cannot yet see it. We remember the saints who have gone before us, giving thanks for the grace that sustained them and trusting the Savior who has received them into His presence. We encourage one another with the same promises, knowing that our hope rests not on the strength of our faith but on the faithfulness of the One in whom we believe.

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." Amen.