

Sermon 2007 All Saints Day  
Text: I John 3: 1-3  
Theme: "What Love Can Do"

Each one of us is a product of our family of origin. The way we are; the way we respond; the things that matter to us all come out of the formation we received as small children. Now that is exciting news if you are Beaver Cleaver. In the Cleaver household, a TV show of course, set in the 1950's, Ward and June Cleaver provided the perfectly loving home. Everything was consistently stable. Wally and Beaver received a fabulous education and always had a hot breakfast and fresh fruit in their lunch not to mention home baked cookies and milk awaiting their return home where they could chat about their day with their mother while she prepared a scrumptious dinner. After dinner was time for homework, baths and off to bed by 8:00 pm to get a full 10 hours of rest.

Each one of us is a product of our family of origin. Not such great news for many people; people whose parents were absorbed with their own lives and problems and couldn't really tend to their needs. People who never knew what to expect in their household when they walked through the door and could

never invite friends over because things were too unpredictable. People for whom homework was and afterthought and was never supervised. People for whom lunch was whatever your friends didn't eat off their tray and dinner was what you could dig up in the kitchen, maybe just chips or candy.

The reality of living in a broken world is that everyone's formation happened somewhere on a line between living as a Cleaver and living as a spawn of Satan. But here's the good news. We are all children of God. Our earthly parents are God's stewards. Now just like all of us, there were times when they did a fabulous job and there were times when they were not so fabulous. We don't have to deal with that. The master rewards and punishes his stewards, not us. So it is between the parent and God to come to agreement on how the children were reared.

Our true parent is God and he is perfect. He loves us with a love that is not just a feeling but an action. His love literally possesses us and changes us. John says in our text that what we will be, we don't know yet, but we do know his love is changing us and giving us the power to make new choices. So wherever

you happen to be on the line between the Cleavers and Satan, you now have the power to move up the line. You have the power to stop defending and excusing and burying the pain and own it and say out loud. "This is where I am, but that is where I'm going!"

All Saints Day is more than a day in which we just remember the dead. The dead are out of this mess and already with our Father. More importantly, All Saints Day is a day of remembering that you and I are children of God and that our Father lavishes love upon us. Those who have already died have already received the prize and although they cannot speak to us, if they could, here's what they would say.

"STOP LIVING AS THOUGH YOU ARE NOT LOVED!" Stop allowing greed and gain to control your lives. Stop allowing selfishness to rule your relationships. Stop allowing bitterness to get in between you and another person. Stop holding grudges as though you have lived a perfect life and need no forgiveness. We are not homeless street urchins who have to grab what we can

get. We are children of God and we have the power to overcome and even change things.

*Figure 1*

All of life is cylindrical. You have heard of being in a rut. That means that there is an action and a reaction. And so the cycle continues. They yell. You yell back. They cry. You back down. They win. You become bitter. On and on it goes with different topics but the same cycle. Each action gets its reaction which in turn spawns the next action and the rut gets deeper and deeper and deeper.

A saint can change the whole pattern! By the power of Christ that dwells in you RIGHT NOW...not someday when you die...but RIGHT NOW, you have the power to jump out of the rut by simply changing the reaction. *Figure 2* LOOK! When a saint, by the power of Christ, changes his reaction, the whole cycle is broken! Everyone is forced out of the rut. Folks, this is enormous power that God has given us. This is life changing.

They yell. You stand fast and calmly say, "I feel disrespected when you speak to me that way." They have to change their next action because you shifted the reaction.

Now it is not easy and I'm not saying it is. It is much easier to stay in a nice comfortable rut. Even when our rut is horrible, it is at least predictable. But no growth happens in a rut. It is not easy, but it is possible. It is possible because you are a saint of God loved with a powerful everlasting love. Now if you choose to stay in your rut, tell the truth. Don't say, "I can't do anything about this." Tell the truth. Say, "I don't want to change anything because I prefer the predictability of my painful rut." The kind of love with which we have been filled gives us the power to do anything we want to.

We are saints of God. We are filled with a love more powerful than we understand and that love frees us to change anything and everything simply by choosing to do so. Tell me you don't want to if you like...but never tell me you can't. Move a mountain? No problem for a saint of God. AMEN.