

Do you see a connection between our fascination with being scared and our faith through which we are delivered from our fears? Read again the scripture for today from Psalm 34 and write your reflections to the questions asked today here.

Thursday, November 2

Read Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22. It was suggested in the message that we might want to take a few cues from the Celtic celebration of Samhain, a time in which the Celts believed magical things can happen because the barrier between the physical and spiritual world is thin. Children, who are already wondering about issues of mortality, can consider what it means to live in a world where there are spiritual elements as well as physical elements of our lives. Could Halloween challenge us to consider our mortality and teach our children that they have nothing to fear and that "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), a heavenly congregation of faithful servants of God who have gone before us? Consider this perspective and write your response here.

Friday, November 3

Review Psalm 34 and read Romans 8:38-39. Halloween invites us to think and allows us to stretch our imaginations. When we dress up, we think of new possibilities for ourselves – if but for one night, we can become super heroes, pirates, zombies, vampires and werewolves. In the same way, the Bible challenges us to imagine ourselves either as rebels against the ways of the Lord or as faithful followers of God. It is never too late for us and our children to remember that it is God who delivers us from all our fears. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. We hope to see you on this next Sunday for our All Saints' Sunday celebration!

Message Notes – October 29, 2023

Healthy Halloween!*

- I. Americans love to be _____ and they have had this love for _____ for at least 50 years.
 - A. The writer of Psalm 34 says, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and _____ me from all my fears" (v. 4).
 - B. In times of trouble, we want to be _____, and yet -- at the very same time -- we seem to like to be scared.
 - C. Should Christians be concerned that a _____ holiday has become big business in the United States, involving almost 70 percent of the population?
- II. My heart breaks a little when I hear of churches using Halloween to literally scare the _____ out of people.
 - A. We don't have to view Halloween at one _____ or the other and it's helpful to understand what Halloween really is.
 - B. The name Halloween means "All Hallows' Eve," the night before All Hallows' Day, more commonly called All _____ Day.
 - C. Even though it has a _____ name, Halloween has pagan roots that go deep into the Celtic festival of Samhain, which means "summer's end."
 - D. Samhain was a time of transition when the _____ and _____ worlds were believed to be very close to one another.
 - E. Once Christianity became the dominant religion of _____, these ancient beliefs took on a Christian flavor

*Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22

- III. So there are _____ with the holiday, but _____ as well.
- One article suggested that we approach Halloween acknowledging that the ancient Celts were _____ to focus on "summer's end."
 - Halloween then becomes about the transition from summer to winter, from _____ to _____.
 - Young children wonder about mortality, so what is the _____ in having them dress up as ghosts or skeletons?
 - Since children learn through _____, there may be some valuable lessons in pretending to cross from the physical to the spiritual world.
 - When children become frightened of witches, ghosts, zombies and vampires, they need to understand that the _____ is with them and has the power to deliver them.
- IV. We can seize this moment and allow it to stretch our _____.
- When we dress up, we think of new _____ for ourselves.
 - In the same way, the _____ challenges us to imagine ourselves either as rebels against the ways of the Lord or as faithful followers of God.
 - This year on Halloween, we might want to _____ new possibilities for ourselves.
 - Best of all, Halloween _____ us to All Saints' Day.
 - Let's remember the dead who are still living eternally as saints of God and as _____ to us.

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, October 30

The message yesterday dealt with All Hallow's Eve or Halloween as we now call it. And we no longer call November 1 All Hallow's Day but All Saints' Day. This is a time of remembering not only the saints of the church, from Saint Patrick to Saint John Paul II – canonized as a saint in 2013. It is also a time to remember the saints of our local church and community; those who have entered the church triumphant. I invite you to remember the saints in your life, especially those who are no longer at our sides. They are now part of the great cloud of witnesses who cheer us on in our lives as we seek to live fully for God's greatest purposes on earth. Celebrate them and consider joining us next Sunday for our All Saints' Sunday and our Rose Memorial Ceremony. As you are inspired by the Saints of the Church, you will be inspired by those whose lives we will celebrate next Sunday.

Tuesday, October 31

Happy and Healthy Halloween! The message began with the thought that Americans love to be scared; from scary movies to all kinds of haunted houses to dressing up for Halloween, we love our horror. Today, think about why Americans love to celebrate a day in which we dress up as zombies, superheroes, princesses and various monsters. This year Americans will spend over 10 Billion dollars on Halloween. Why do we have such a love affair with Halloween and being scared? Write your reflections here.

Wednesday, November 1

Read Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22. Verse four tells us, "I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Perhaps part of our love of being scared is the relief when the terror passes and we know we're alright. We are delivered from all our fears! What does the phrase "delivered me from all my fear" mean to you? Who else or what else could deliver you from all that you fear?