



3<sup>rd</sup> November 2024 | All Saints Day

*Every saint has a story to tell the world*

*Is not the church like a library,  
filled with saints whose lives celebrate the story of God?*

As many of you know, I recently conducted the funeral of a person, not much older than me. On the Order of Service of many funerals you'll often see words like "In memory of" or "Remembering the life of" printed above their photo.

Another popular one is "Celebrating the life of" their loved one.

This phrase, "A life worth celebrating" really got me thinking this week and especially as we celebrate All Saints Day.

After all, today we celebrate the lives of these past disciples of Jesus Christ, knowing their lives are examples of how God calls us to live.

What makes a life worth celebrating?

How do we measure whether a life is worth celebrating?

Throughout the ages there have been thousands, if not tens of thousands, of saints whose lives have celebrated God's presence, His faithfulness, His grace, His forgiveness and His steadfastness to His promises.

**Point 1 | The Christian life is worth celebrating, not because of our achievements, talents or qualifications, but because we responded to God's call to step into His story.**

Many of these thousands of saints are named in God's eternal story of the Bible.

Think about it, God's story is made up of many different stories, with many different characters.

And all of these different characters tell a story that celebrates God's faithfulness to His creation.

Let's consider God's story for a moment.

God opens His epic tale by revealing that even before the story begins, He was already there. That means He is the ultimate author of the story.

Although He starts with the words "In the beginning," what unfolds is the story of *our* beginning, and the wonderful fellowship we were created to enjoy with our Creator.

But like every story, sooner or later, there is a conflict or an event that causes everything to spiral into chaos.

Our story remembers the disastrous decision made by our ancestors, when they chose to step into the god-like role of deciding for themselves how good and evil should be defined, rather than trust God's wisdom.

Rather than allowing God to be the author of their story, they started to write their own story, like a person would narrate their own autobiography.

This decision, however, resulted in a torrent of sin and darkness flooding the world, with each person's autobiography conflicting with their neighbours.

As the story unfolds, more stories of how the generations adjusted to living in this world broken by their own choices, and the strife caused when each person tries to live as the author of their life.

Skipping ahead to the climax of the story, Creator God – who is always the main character of the story - entered the world Himself, in the form of His own creation. An eternal man, named Jesus, who revealed God to us and dwelt amongst us.

The climatic chapters tell the historical story of how Jesus lived as the Creator God designed humans to live. Then, He willingly laid down His life, surrendering to death, so that the way back into fellowship with His holy Father could be made.

And the story of God's invitation to follow His way of salvation, through trusting in His Son Jesus, continues to this day. Not only does God's story not have an ending, it's ending is even better than its beginning.

That is God's epic story in a nutshell.

Now, while I managed to summarise God's story in a few short sentences, God's long story is interwoven with hundreds of shorter stories of the lives of those who contributed and shaped how God's story played out. And many of those stories are the ones that we celebrate on All Saints Day, along with the celebration of life of many others.

So, let's return to the question, what makes a life worth celebrating?

And once we've determined that, how can we ensure we celebrate the life that God has given us?

The more I pondered the question, what makes a life worth celebrating, the more I realised how often I measure the worth of my life by a criteria created by the world, rather than using the criteria God has revealed in His story.

Although the story of humanity clearly states that God is the author of our story, many people even some named in the Bible, chose to live their lives as the author of their own life story.

Or, as I mentioned before they live their life as an autobiography.

What are the markings of a life lived as an autobiography?

As their own author, *they* decided which characters are allowed to enter their story.

*They* decided what mountains to climb, and what career to pursue.

If they were to choose a song to commemorate their life, they'd probably choose "I did it my way."

The problem is, when you are the author of your own life, you're forced to measure your life's worth upon what *you* have accomplished, what skills and talents *you* have mastered, or how far up the ladder of social status *you* climbed.

And while some people do achieve amazing feats in their life, and their stories sit on the bookshelves in our libraries, that is not the criteria God gave us to measure whether a life is worth celebrating.

**Point 2 | The Christian's life is not an autobiography. Rather we're invited to step into God's salvation story and allow Jesus' biographical life to shine through our biographical story.**

In Psalm 139 we read,

*"You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."* (Psalm 139:16)

Isn't it amazing? Even though we all have a unique life story, God does not want us to live our life as an autobiography.

Rather, He calls us to acknowledge that He is the author of our story.

We can rest easy, knowing that God is in control of what's coming up in your future.

When there is an unexpected twist in the plot, we know that God has planned it.

When a new character turns up, or unexpected event enters, we know it is a tool of His grace.

So, each new chapter advances His purpose and fulfils His plan.

And, what is even more amazing, is that we were chosen to be a character in God's story even before we were born.

How is that possible?

When we respond to Jesus' invitation to find our life in Him, we step into the life of the main character of God's story: God's eternal Son, Jesus.

And as a character in Jesus' biographical story, we get to enjoy the same fellowship Jesus has with His heavenly father.

This is the same fellowship that the first humans enjoyed right at the beginning of the story.

We heard about this in today's reading,

*"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."* (Revelation 21:3)

So what makes a life worth celebrating? Because Jesus lived a life worth celebrating and our lives are hidden in his life, any life which shines the light of Christ into the world is certainly worth celebrating.

**Application | Each church is like a local library with each saint being a living book, that tells the story of God's transformation that the world can read and understand.**

Finally, if we stay with this literary picture, and consider how we are to live out our celebration of Jesus' story in our day to day lives, we'll recognise that all of us here are like a library, filled with living stories of God's grace, forgiveness and transformation.

But, even if we are like a library, we are a unique kind of library. Why? Because we are a library that most people in our community won't ever visit.

Most people won't walk into our building, plop next to a person and ask them, 'So tell me your story.'

So how will people discover what God has written on the pages of our lives?

We must be a mobile library, with stories that literally walk themselves off the shelves and into people's homes and hearts.

Most of us have heard the phrase, *"You may be the only Bible some people ever read..."*

So, are you keeping your story under lock and key?

Are you celebrating the life God has given you every day, believing you are a living expression of the greatest story ever to be crafted?

Let us not be 'closed book' people, but rather, may our lives be open bibles which tell the story of God's goodness and presence in our lives, available for anyone who is in the search of a really good story.