

**October 27, 2017**

**“All Saints—A Day to Remember”**

All Saints Sunday means more and more to me as more and more of my friends on this side of the sod are now entering “the dearly departed.” My friend in Nebraska who is still kicking, Dan Flanagan, once wrote in a sermon about a wonderful book that has merit—especially on a day like All Saints Sabbath.

Dan wrote a decade or so ago about a book, *Saints, Sinners, and Beechers*, in which Lyman Beecher Stowe tells the story of an occasion when Thomas K. Beecher substituted for his famous preacher brother Henry Ward Beecher at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn. Many people in the congregation had come to hear the renowned Henry Beecher preach. When Thomas Beecher appeared in the pulpit, some of the people started for the door. Sensing their disappointment, Thomas Beecher raised his hand for silence and said, “All those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward Beecher may withdraw from the church, and all those who came to worship God may remain.”

Of course, when we worship on All Saint’s Sabbath we do not worship any individual but rather we are here to remember that “we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). We worship to remember those saints who have given us a model by which to live out our Christian faith. It is our prayer that the memory of those saints who have gone before us will help each of us become more faithful to the covenant that God has cut with us.

God wants each one of us in the covenant fold, but God simply invites—God does not coerce, force, or threaten, that is if one understands that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). I like the story that Karl Stegall tells of two brothers who entered the first grade in 1991. One said he was born on January 1, 1984. The other brother said he was born on April 4, 1984.

“That is impossible,” said the teacher. “No,” replied the first brother, “one of us is adopted.”

“Which one?” asked the teacher.

“I don’t know,” he replied. “One day I asked my mother and she kissed us both and said, ‘I forgot.’”

Perhaps this is the method by which we become saints. God kisses us all and forgets which ones of us are adopted and which ones of us are naturals.