

“THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NAIL”

Message for All Saints Day

From Pastor Norman Staker

November 2, 2025

DANIEL 7: 1-3, 15-18 ** EPHESIANS 1: 11-23 ** LUKE 6: 20-31

GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND FROM
OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. HE IS RISEN; HE IS
RISEN INDEED!!

hen Jesus looked up at his disciples and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But I say to you that listen, Love you enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

As the story goes, they built a new church building and people came from far and wide to see it. They admired its beauty! Up on the roof, a little nail heard the people praising everything about the lovely structure-except the nail! No one even knew he was there, and he became angry and jealous.

“If I am that insignificant, nobody will miss me if I quit!” So the nail then released its hold, slid down the roof, and fell in the mud.

That night it rained and rained. Soon, the shingle that had no nail blew away, and the roof began to leak. The water streaked the walls and the beautiful murals. The plaster began to fall, the carpet was stained, and the pulpit Bible was ruined by water. All this because a little nail decided to quit!

But what of the nail? While holding the shingle, it was obscure but it was also useful. Buried in the mud it was just as obscure, but now it was useless and would soon be eaten up by rust!

The moral of the story – every member is important to the church! You may, like the nail, feel obscure at times, but just like the nail, your absence is felt. When you are not present for worship, in some way the body of Christ hurts. We are ALL, capital A-L-L, ALL a part of the Lord's ministry.

The importance of the nail is the theme of my message this Sunday. A small nail holding one shingle on the church roof has a very important part to do in the body of Christ. And if that nail has an important work to do, imagine what you and I have to do in the body of Christ.

Jesus, in our gospel lesson this morning, is speaking about the body of Christ. This is Luke's version of the Beatitudes; you probably recognized the similar words from Matthew.

The body of Christ, the church, is made up of people who have experienced the brokenness of this world. For Jesus said that if you are poor, in sorrow, if you are hated, then you are in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is made up of those who have experienced the brokenness of this world, sorrow, grief, hunger, poverty, all those things that remind us that we are not perfect, those are the people who are in the body of Christ.

In this picture of the saints, the body of Christ, Jesus is speaking to the human condition. He is telling us that as our lives live in the brokenness of this world, we are blessed. We don't need to be perfect or to pretend that the sinfulness of this world does not affect our lives.

We are blessed regardless of what we are experiencing.

I think that thought is important in this day and age. A saint is not a perfect person here on earth, but rather, a saint is one who knows the brokenness of this world and then turns to Christ for comfort and rest. In our world, we want the best, we want fame and fortune, and if we don't get it, we think there is something wrong with us. That is the theology of prosperity. It says if you are right with God, then everything in your life should be right, too.

But Jesus is clearly saying something about the theology of the cross. Jesus knows that we are living in an in-between time. We are saved, meaning we are saints, but at the same time we are sinners, who have not been fully redeemed. Last week we would have heard it said, "Simul iustus et peccator," Martin Luther's favorite Latin line, saint and sinner at the same time. So Jesus is saying that even though you are

a saint, redeemed by the blood of Christ, your life might not be and will not be perfect. So blessed are the poor, blessed are the hungry, blessed are those who weep, because one day your full redemption will come.

Jesus is telling us that we are blessed now in spite of all the brokenness around us and we are to use that blessing to walk with the saints around us.

Jesus is telling us that we are like that nail; we need to hold the body of Christ together by loving each other.

Billy Graham says "Church-goers are like coals in a fire. When they cling together, they keep the flame aglow; when they separate, they die out."

We need each other in the body of Christ. Though we might think of ourselves like that nail, we are indeed important in the body of Christ. When we cling together the body grows and the light shines.

This is demonstrated very clearly in the following: Randy Frazee wrote a book called "The Connecting Church." He has a son who was born without a left hand. One day in Sunday School the teacher was talking with the children about the church. To illustrate her point she folded her hands together and said, "Here's the church, here's the steeple; open the doors and see all the people."

She asked the class to do it along with her – obviously not thinking about the little Frazee boy's inability to pull this exercise off. Then it dawned on her that the boy wouldn't be able to join in.

Before she could do anything about it, the little boy sitting next to Frazee's son, a friend of his from the time they were babies, reached out his left hand and said, "Let's do it together." The two boys proceeded to join their hands together to make the church and the steeple.

Let's do it together is the key phrase here. As the body of Christ, we must do it together. We must help each other in our faith. We must touch each other with the Spirit of Christ. We in the body of Christ are important to each other. WE touch each other in that body of Christ. WE touch when we pass the peace. We touch when we reach out our hand and say good morning. We touch when we offer a shoulder for one to lean on. We touch when we extend a hand to help another through grief.

This is exactly what Jesus commands us to do... love in a way that goes against human nature. But how do we do that?

In our text this morning, you and I are called to love. Jesus doesn't say if you have enemies, He draws on the assumption that you will have enemies and people who are against you. And I must admit His command is a little hard to swallow, this is what He says: "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse."

He isn't just telling us to avoid retaliation; Jesus is telling us to do good instead of seeking revenge, He's telling us to speak blessings instead of insults, and to pray for those who do us wrong.

Loving our enemies means that we will refuse to let hatred take root in our hearts. It means that we will recognize that even those who harm us are still people made in the image of God. This kind of love requires a supernatural strength that can come only from walking closely with Jesus, and when we choose to love, well, that's when we truly reflect the character of Christ.

Folks, love is not a feeling; love is a choice.

If anybody has ever wronged you, Jesus isn't asking you if you feel like loving them; He's commanding you to act in love. He says pray for them, forgive them; love them.

Then we are called to radical kindness. What's that? "If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also."

The world says, "Get even," but Jesus says, "Give grace." It's not weakness to extend grace ... it's breaking the cycle of retaliation. Instead of responding in kind, we respond with kindness.

Radical kindness means loving beyond what's convenient. It means stepping outside of our comfort zones to extend grace to those that we think might not deserve it. Unexpected kindness leaves a powerful impact; it reveals God's love in a tangible way. It isn't about being passive; it's about demonstrating a strength that comes from the confidence we have in God's justice.

Who is the hardest person in your life to love? What if God is calling you to take the first step of kindness? Will you do it? Would you extend the hand of

forgiveness or offer help even when it was undeserved? Small acts of kindness can transform relationships.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He didn't curse His enemies—He prayed, “Father, forgive them.” That's the kind of love we are called to reflect. If Jesus, in His suffering, could show mercy to those who crucified Him, can't we do the same in our daily lives?

When we love like Jesus, we reveal God's heart to the world. Is there someone you need to forgive today? Maybe it's a family member or a co-worker; maybe you need to forgive yourself. Who do you need to forgive? Who is God calling you to love in a radical way this week?

“In the greatest act of mercy, Jesus hung on the cross and prayed, ‘Father, forgive them.’ He didn't just talk about loving enemies; He lived it. If He could love like that, what's stopping us from doing the same?”

Today is All Saints' Sunday. I read in one of my commentaries that the Roman Catholics count the saints by the hundreds! Lutherans number them by the tens of thousands! You heard that correctly, the tens of thousands! Are you one of them? You ought to be! You are called to be a saint! Today as we honor the saints, we remind you of this high calling. I have come to know and I remember so many saints who have gone on to their heavenly reward; I'm talking about so many here whom I remember that have been saintly in my ministry and I can think of so many others at my home church. I'm sure all of you can think of not only members here at Bethel but at other churches that you've attended over the course of your lifetimes. And while we still count those who have gone on as saints, today we look in the mirror and say, Happy All Saints' Day to ourselves.

AMEN!!