Grace, Mercy and Peace unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Today we are observing the festival of All Saints, we remember today, the faithful who have gone before us. ---While we remember the faithfully departed, Jesus Christ remains at the forefront of our meditation, for He is the life of every believer. ---Jesus is in heaven, He is still fully man, yet resurrected and glorified in His ascension, seated at the right hand of God the Father. There, around Jesus are all saints, **a great multitude that no one can number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.**

---Jesus is the Savior of the whole world. Jesus is the only one who can make saints out of sinners. Jesus is the only one who can make good out of evil. Jesus is the only one who makes atonement for the sins of the whole world. Jesus is the only one who can make new life out of death.

It is because of the Lamb that the saints are clothed in white waving victory palms. The Lamb was slain, but has arisen. While on earth all the saints who are now in heaven beheld Jesus by faith, even as you believe in Him now. ---Today is a day for remembrance of Jesus and for all the saints whom He has saved. They are an encouragement that the Lord is faithful and saves His beloved.

---Although you may have tears for the loved ones lost, they are not bitter tears, for you will be reunited. As we will soon confess together in the words of the Nicene Creed, we believe in heaven and earth and in all things visible and invisible. There is much we do not see right now, for our eyes are clouded by tears.

For those who in the shadow of sorrow mourn the recent death of Pastor Mike Maddick, the members of Trinity Lutheran in State Center and his family, tears are shed.

For Pastor Bill Traphagan of St. Paul Lutheran in Stanwood, Iowa, and his wife Stephanie, tears are shed over the loss of Matthew and Jonah, their baby boys who were stillborn in September.

For each one of you, who mourn the death of family and friends, there are many tears shed.

Not only do we weep over death, we weep over the cause of death, sin, and all of sin's burdens in our lives. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn broken relationships, friendships that have fallen apart, marriages that end in divorce. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn sickness and disease that steal away health, we mourn frail bodies and weakness that render a man helpless, we mourn cancer. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn drunkenness that often overtakes a person and ruins their life. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn when children disrespect their parents and when parents are too harsh on their children. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn the lust of our flesh that can lead to fornication and often abortion; in the case of Kermit Gosnell the abortive murders of thousands upon thousands of innocent babies. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn and weep, we shed tears because of our own sins that have hurt others, and we shed tears when others sin against and hurt us. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

We mourn and weep when natural disasters, and accidents occur: tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, factory explosions, car crashes. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

Most of all, we mourn those who reject Jesus, who disbelieve the Lamb. Especially we mourn those who lash out in violence against Christ and we weep with our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for the faith. Especially the September 27 bloody attack by Muslims on Reverend Mohammed Gurhan, Lutheran Heritage Foundation translator in Somalia. ---My mom even formatted several LHF translations of the Small Catechism which were printed in pocket size booklets and are being distributed throughout Africa, and I personally know the former director of LHF - East Africa; Pastor, Missionary James May told me about the life threatening difficulties of evangelists in Somalia. Our eyes are clouded by tears.

---Through eyes clouded by tears we see the great tribulation all around, the evil world that hates Jesus and the Good News that He alone forgives sin. ---And that tribulation is even within, as we battle our own evil inclinations. ---Still, we believe in that which is invisible and is beheld only by faith in Christ. We believe that Christ gives lamps of gladness to those suffering in the darkness of sin and death. We believe that Christ is able to raise all sinners from the gloom of sin.

---Tears of sorrow and loss make the world doubt but, we know the Lord cares for us; the saints in Heaven testify to the Lord's mercy. ---We mourn our loved ones who have died, but we know Christ will strengthen his children and give us, with all the saints, the unfading crown of glory. We know that as He rose from the dead, so will all the saints.

---In Revelation, John gives us a glimpse into that heavenly reality.

There we see, by faith, those saints who have gone before us and who are worshiping Christ now.

---There they are: **Standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”** ---These Saints were recipients of the Gospel heralded by faithful missionaries throughout the generations; they have victory in Christ.

---African pastor, Tertullian of Carthage said in his Apologeticus, (which records the unjust treatment of Christians in the 2nd century), ---"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." ---That is to say, though the Devil and world kill our bodies they cannot kill our souls. The Church will be victorious. When the saints are persecuted for the faith it draws others to wonder at their conviction and opens opportunity to share Jesus and the resurrection, so that many more might worship Him and enjoy heaven.

Indeed, in heaven,the saints and **all the angels are standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures**. ---The 4 living creatures represent the 4 Gospels: Matthew as wingéd-man, Mark as Lion, Luke as Ox, John as soaring Eagle.

--The saints who heard the four Gospels and believed all **fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”**

All the Saints, **clothed in white robes, are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** Christians are called saints because in Christ we are set apart from the world, which is perishing. Though our eyes are now clouded by tears we will see the Lamb who was slain - Jesus, crucified to wash our robes, to clothe us in His purity that we might worship him forever; His body and blood given for the forgiveness of sin.

Only by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and blood are we brought through the great tribulation. So now, instead of remembering every evil and every sin we behold the Lamb, we remember Christ, the life of every believer.

With all who have gone before us we will be in Heaven, **before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter us with his presence.**

There will be no more reason to mourn, there will be no more hunger, no more thirst, no more scorching sun and heat. There will be no more tears clouding our eyes.

**For the Lamb** of God, who takes away the sin of the world, is **in the midst of the throne and will be your shepherd, and he will guide you to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from your eyes.** Amen

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen