SERMON November 1, 2026 Pastor Cris Frigm

Our encounter with God this week feels particularly timeless – or perhaps it's better to say that it feels time-confused.

We're always jumping around in the story of God's people as told through scripture. We have this three-year spiral of readings that takes us through a combination of our calendar and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but we can't just read the story straight through every time because we can't fit it all in between when we celebrate the birth and when we celebrate the resurrection. Maybe we should move Easter? Or celebrate Christmas in July?

That doesn't seem too likely, so we'll stick with what we have: a story that moves back and forth through the earthly journey of Jesus connecting that story to our story to God's story. We add to that rhythm the larger story of God's salvific plan that we profess comes to its fruition in the second coming…someday.

We mixed that into today's reading as well as we listened to a passage from Revelation. The timelessness of God's work and promise comes into our celebration of All Saints as we hear of the days when we stand before God's throne and God will wipe away the tears. Other parts of Revelation will tell us that the new creation that was started in Christ will be complete, and the New Jerusalem will be our home for all eternity.

That revealed image to the author of this last book of the Bible is a poetic representation of what God has done, is doing, and will do. It defies location within a human timeline. It doesn't predict when the end will come. It gave the early church a foundation of understanding what it means to live in the time-confusing reality of the now and not yet…of living a life as claimed and saved children of God while all around them the world continued to fall apart. Ever since those words were put into scripture it has been interpreted to mean…now. No, now. Maybe now?

We still live in the now/not yet. We gather around this table, calling on the imagery of the lamb of Revelation to celebrate the claim that God has made on us without really understanding what it might look like tomorrow, or next year, or a lifetime from now.

We gather, with the saints who have gone before us to continue to wander and wonder our way through the blessedness Jesus proclaims to be ours even as we experience hopelessness, hunger, and grief.

Jesus blesses peacemakers, the meek, and the merciful. While all around us, the warmongers, the braggarts, and the cruel continue their oppressive ways. We're left wondering when all will be revealed and we will know what it means to live as God's children in the promise hinted at in Revelation, in the Gospels, in the letters.

When will we get to "see" God as Jesus says the "pure in heart" will? What must I do to qualify as "pure in heart"? What must I do to be part of the blessedness Jesus proclaims on the mountain?

That isn't what Jesus was doing. He wasn't giving us a to-do list; he was trying to give us a picture of what it means to live in this world and the Kingdom of Heaven when everything gets mixed up. Because we are God's children, we are blessed. It's not another work we have to do; it's a new state of being having been claimed in the waters of baptism. And it pushes us – just a bit – out of the worldly time of everyday life and into God's time. Even when we aren't sure, even when we don't see it, even when the world seems to overwhelm us.

Today is a timeless day. We've named those for whom we've grieved this past year. But every time we gather for worship, we remember all those who have gone before us – known and unknown. While worshiping in one particular moment, we pull the history of all the saints out of their moment in the timeline to be part of this moment.

Not that there should be a hierarchy, but I have been thinking about two saints who have gone before me. I'll leave the fictional Saint Jean Luc Picard for another sermon at another time.

My earliest memories of church are centered in sitting with Grandpa Miller – my mom's dad. If you're looking for someone who defines "meek" then I would offer Kermit Cole Miller. Yes, I said "Kermit." That's also a story for another day. I heard a definition of meek that is not the doormat we've often made it out to be. It's about being angry for the right reason, at the right time, at the right people, for the right amount of time. And that defines my Grandpa Miller…because he was never mad at me.

Everyone who knew him would say he was never mad at anyone…except that one time he got stuck in a traffic circle and my mom heard him actually swear. My memories of him went from resting my head on his lap while I was bored with worship to spending summer Wednesdays with him because that was his day off from Sears to learning how to mow his lawn… and every day in between. Trying to convince him to stop smoking, which he never did until lung cancer ended his earthly journey at 67. I was 13.

He was the first person I knew that I would ever claim to be a saint.

The second saint is my mom. She was… not meek. She also probably more clearly illustrated to me the simul justis et peccator concept that was so important to Luther… simultaneously sinner and saint. That's probably not fair. When your grandparent dies when you're 13, you don't really get to know the parts that weren't meek or… saintly.

Having my mom around for more of my life gave me the chance for her to teach me about God's love and the brokenness of life on this world, directly and indirectly. It also means she also showed me what it means to be a beloved and blessed child of God through all those broken times.

I know I'm not the only one to lose a parent earlier than we're "supposed to." I know I was blessed to have her until I was all but 36 – when she was almost 59 – but I also know that you're never ready for that goodbye.

I don't ascribe a particular beatitude to my mom like I can ascribe "meekness" to my grandfather. She was a bit of a peacemaker but not in the way I think Jesus meant. My mom showed me what it meant to hold onto the promise of God through all that life throws at us.

I wear this cross because it was the pattern for the stained glass cross she was going to make for me as an ordination gift, a day she didn't get to see. Not in any way I can be sure to be true…but I don't get to be sure about God's timeline. Not yet.

Those are stories of the past. My past. But they're also the stories of today. I hold them just a little bit closer as we pull the images of our past into our present. On this day, we remember those we've lost, and we celebrate those we've gained. We celebrate that the love of God, the claim of God, is not bound by time or place, but a past, present, and future reality. We dip our toes into the cosmic plan we don't understand because that's part of why we gather for worship. That's a fundamental truth about God's love. It is timeless. It is for all of us. Always. Amen.