MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1 2026 KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"The Thin Veil Between Worlds"

Based on Revelation 7:9-17

I was sorting through some yarn in the cubby earlier this week, and happened upon a few hand written patterns from an unknown source.

Pattern For Two Tone "Block" Afghan. It listed the number of skeins of wool one would need, the number of colours, the size of needle to use, and how many stitches to cast on. At the bottom of the sheet, in a different coloured ink, written at a later time, were these simple words:

"Mine is moss green and white and is very pretty."

It's like a thin curtain between the past and the present lifted for just a moment and gave us a glimpse into this unknown woman's life:

- Her gentle pride at a craft well completed;
- Her pleasure that her effort and time had come together in the way she imagined.

Part of the historical background to Hallowe'en and its partner in crime, All Saints Day stems from an ancient Gaelic festival that marked the end of the harvest, and the beginning of the winter season. Great bonfires were set ablaze, a feast of food and mead was shared, and stories were told of their ancestors. The ancients claimed that in this special time there was a 'thinning of the veil between worlds," the dead and the living; reality and memory. It was almost as if telling the stories of their fore-fathers and mothers, almost made them come alive once again.

And isn't that what sharing stories does.

- Keeps memories alive and no one is ever forgotten.
- Ensures the legacy of the loved one who has gone before us burns bright within ourselves and the little ones who come after us.
- Creates inspiration and imagination and creativity within new generations.

The Christian practice of "All Saints" came in part to stamp out old pagan traditions, yes. But the even deeper purpose of honouring the Saints was to keep their story alive, so that their courage, or tenacity, or steadfastness, or devotion or skill would inspire other Christians.

Over time, the great men and women of the church became 'sainted', venerated, remembered, and in the Roman Catholic tradition today, honoured on a particular Sunday each year, precisely, so their efforts for the cause of Christ will never be forgotten.

Of course, some of the earliest Saints were the apostles themselves, many of whom died horrific deaths in the name of Christ. Other great theologians, members of the monastic movement had their names venerated too. But somewhere along the way, the idea of the "Saint" began to be counted as someone way beyond the average man or woman. They were seen as

- Great and majestic
- Mighty and strong

- Brave in battle or powerful in prose

And while it is a good thing to remember and re-tell the stories of our Christian heroes and heroines, maybe our Christian egos have gotten in the way a little. Would Christ have said that one Christian is better than another Christian, has higher status or more claim to a room in the heavenly abode? I think not! Remember the two Johns arguing about who got to sit at the right hand of Jesus? That didn't end well for either of them.

When John spoke of his vision in the dangerous book of Revelation, he said first…

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God… (v11)

But it's what comes next that is telling.

Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (v13-14).

The Elder asked "Who are these people?"

- We would expect the Elder to know,
- We would assume the Elder was more knowledgeable,
- We would consider the Elder of higher status because of his title.

But the Elder did not know.

The ones in their white robes were just ordinary folk, who in their ordinary lives

- Had held fast to their faith,
- Stayed strong through persecution,
- Loved fully their fellow man.

They were the ones with the white robes. They were the Saints headed for glory.

It would seem, that John was saying ordinary people living out ordinary lives, bumping into other ordinary people getting on with their ordinary lives could, extraordinary or 'Saintly.'

I think that there are 'Saints' all around us:

- Some we recognized and others invisible.
- Some were loud and others almost silent.
- There were those that nudged, and those that pushed hard.
- Perhaps even, there were those who believed, and those who do not.

But in some way, large or small,

- They made a meaningful impact in your life.
- They influenced the decisions you made over the years, that have brought you to who you are today.
- They encouraged you, inspired you, buoyed your spirits, and helped you find strength when you feel weak.

In some way, they helped you hold on to your faith, find your faith, or deepen your faith.

So now in this quiet moment, close your eyes and think of one of your Saints who has passed. Hold them gently in your thoughts. Allow the veil to lift ever so slightly and listen to these words from Revelation:

Therefore,
"they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd;
'he will lead them to springs of living water.'
'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

~Vs 14-17