Remembering with Gratitude

Scripture: Revelation 7:9–17 (NRSVUE)
November 1, 2026 – Week 1 of Sermon Series: "A Heart of Gratitude"
Theme: "I AM REMEMBERING." – God's faithfulness lives on.
Key Sentence: We remember with gratitude, grieve with hope, and live as faithful witnesses.

Introduction

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we begin our November sermon series, "A Heart of Gratitude." Last month, in "A People Made Ready," we considered how God prepares us to follow Christ. Now we ask: What kind of heart grows from that preparation? A grateful heart—a heart that remembers, responds, returns, and rejoices.

Today is All Saints Sunday. We remember those who have gone before us: family members, friends, teachers, mentors, and faithful members of the church. Some memories bring smiles. Others bring tears. Sometimes the same memory brings both.

Perhaps someone taught you to pray. Perhaps a parent or grandparent brought you to church. Perhaps someone quietly encouraged you when you felt discouraged. Their names may never be written in a history book, but their love has left a mark on your life.

On this day, our faith does not ask us to pretend that loss is easy. Instead, Scripture offers something stronger: gratitude for the lives we have received, comfort in the God who holds us, and hope for the future Christ has promised.

Today let us reflect on three movements:

> ***First,*** *Remembering the Faithful Who Have Gone Before Us*
> ***Second,*** *Finding Comfort in the Shepherd Who Wipes Away Our Tears*
> ***Third,*** *Living as Grateful Witnesses Today*
>
> ***We remember with gratitude, grieve with hope, and live as faithful witnesses.***

First, Remembering the Faithful Who Have Gone Before Us

In Revelation 7, John sees an astonishing vision: a great multitude that no one can count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They are not divided by language, culture, or the boundaries we build on earth. They are united in worship before God.

This is a beautiful picture for our two congregations. The church is bigger than any one congregation or generation. We belong to God's people across time and across the world. The worship we offer today joins a much larger song of praise.

On All Saints Sunday, we give thanks for those who showed us what faith looks like in ordinary life. Not only famous leaders, but also people who cooked meals, visited the sick, taught children, sang hymns, served quietly, and prayed faithfully.

Who helped you know Jesus Christ? Whose kindness helped you keep going? Take a moment to remember that person. [Pause.] Their love was a gift, and gratitude is one way we honor it.

Remembering with gratitude does not mean forgetting the pain of their absence. It means recognizing that death cannot erase the goodness God brought into our lives through them.

Second, Finding Comfort in the Shepherd Who Wipes Away Our Tears

The vision in Revelation is not a promise that God's people never suffer. The multitude includes those who have come through great suffering. Their lives have known hardship. Yet they now stand before God, sheltered by God's presence.

Then we hear one of Scripture's most tender promises: the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd, guiding them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Notice what God does not say. God does not tell us that our tears are shameful, or that faithful people should never cry. God promises to wipe them away. Our sorrow matters to God.

That is especially meaningful when a congregation gathers amid recent losses, or when we gather to remember and celebrate a loved one's life. We can thank God for a person's life and still admit that we miss them deeply. Christian hope gives room for both gratitude and grief.

At the heart of this promise stands Jesus Christ—the Lamb who is also our Shepherd. Our hope is not simply that memories will last, but that Christ, who died and rose again, holds his people in enduring love.

> ***The Shepherd sees our tears. The Shepherd knows our names. And the Shepherd will not abandon us.***

Third, Living as Grateful Witnesses Today

All Saints Sunday is not only about looking backward. It also asks us how we will live today. Those who nurtured our faith have passed something precious to us. What will we pass on to others?

We may not be able to do something spectacular. But we can do something faithful. We can call someone who is lonely. We can visit someone who is grieving. We can encourage a child or young person. We can forgive, pray, serve, and offer hospitality to a neighbor.

Think again of the person you remembered a few moments ago. What is one act of love you learned from them? This week, practice that love. In this way, gratitude becomes more than a feeling. It becomes a living witness.

Our October series called us "A People Made Ready." Today, as we enter November, may we become people ready to remember thankfully, comfort tenderly, and live faithfully. The best way to honor a legacy of faith is not only to speak about it, but to carry its love into the world.

Conclusion

Let me close with a simple picture. Imagine a church on a dark evening. An elderly woman is holding a small candle as the congregation sings. A child beside her is waiting with an unlit candle. The woman leans toward the child and shares her flame. Then the child turns and lights someone else's candle. Slowly, light moves from one person to another, until the sanctuary is glowing.

Here is the beautiful thing: the first candle does not lose its light by sharing it. Instead, the light spreads.

One day, that woman's place in the pew may be empty. But the love she shared can still shine through the people she encouraged, prayed for, welcomed, and taught. That is one picture of a faithful legacy. The light is not ours to keep; it comes from Christ, and we are called to share it.

Yet our Christian hope is greater than the passing of a flame. Revelation tells us that the Lamb is our Shepherd, and God will wipe away every tear. We entrust those we love to the mercy of the risen Christ, whose light death cannot overcome.

So, dear friends, remember those who shaped your faith. Give thanks for the light they shared. If you come with a heavy heart, receive Christ's comfort. And this week, pass that light on through one simple act of love.

> ***"I AM REMEMBERING." – God's faithfulness lives on.***
> ***We remember with gratitude. We grieve with hope. We live as faithful witnesses.***

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reference Notes

1. The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, Revelation 7:9–17; on the multitude before the throne, the Lamb as Shepherd, and God's promise to wipe away tears.

2. Craig R. Koester, Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Yale Bible 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), commentary on Revelation 7:9–17.

3. Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, revised edition, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), commentary on Revelation 7:9–17.

4. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Common Worship (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018), on All Saints Day, Christian hope, and the church's worship in times of remembrance.

5. The candlelight scene in the conclusion is an original illustrative parable, not a reported historical event.