

Note: Due to some technical difficulties, Sunday's comments were delivered without reference to the sermon I actually prepared. (I hate it when that happens.) Here's the one I wrote..

...Some of them have left behind a name, so that others declare their praise. But of others there is no memory; they have perished as though they had never existed; they have become as though they had never been born, they and their children after them. But these also were godly men, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten; Their offspring will continue forever, and their glory will never be blotted out. Their bodies are buried in peace, but their name lives on generation after generation. (Ecclesiasticus 44)

Shorter days, longer nights — It's dark when I get up and it'll be dark at 5:00, pretty soon.

And things move so quickly with lots to do --- especially in my current circumstances.

I've been thinking a lot about how little time there is — about the way things just pass us by and about how my days just get swallowed up with more stuff that I can schedule - - thinking perhaps about my own impermanence. As some of you know I had two close friends die this last week – I don't HAVE all that many close friends so I feel the loss. And see my own time in that perspective.

Ecclesiasticus points that all too well.

And of course, like everyone else, I have my own ways of dealing with that. Being creative with my hands and mind is an integral part of that for me -- the need to produce things that will last, that my children might enjoy – that my grandchildren might like to have and use. Shelves, cabinets, furniture, beds, chests. Chicken houses, and so on..

Some of my best times have been spent in the woodshop making things -- tangible things for my children and grandchildren for where we live -- things that I have made literally from scratch; mementos, really -- things for them upon which to hang memories of this time and this place and this set of circumstances. So, in my mind, in my notebook, and in piles of rough sawn or recycled lumber in my shop, or in my children's homes are beds, hall shelves, lap desks – bookcases -- pieces of myself that I hope will outlast me for a while, for my children, my grandchildren and those I love.

Because all things pass, even me.

Occasionally, I write in a journal in my laptop for the same reasons, recording my observations of life here and now, my feelings and my hopes, not only for others that may someday be interested in them, but also for me, when I'm older and I don't remember so well.

Because memories fade.

All things pass -- even memories fade. What we are now, what we were, what we will become -- all that will pass. The writing of Jesus Ben Sirach, commonly called Ecclesiasticus points that up: "*Some have left a name... And there are some who have perished as though they have not lived and so have their children after them.*" We don't last. Our name and our memory doesn't last.

And when faced with impermanence, we begin to sort out what matters, and more often than not, what matters isn't things, it's relationships - kindnesses shown, love shared, life lived together ... Sometimes, things matter, but when it gets right down to it, I believe things matter only in proportion to the human relationships they represent.

"*Some have perished as though they have never lived,*" Ecclesiasticus writes, yet they were people of mercy whose kindness have never been forgotten and whose love shall live on in many ways...

Saints.

All Saints Sunday is a time to remember those people who are dear to us who have led the way for us in one way or another.

And there are many on my mind today, just as there are many of your mind. Some here sitting with us. Some here sitting with us but we just can't see them. All of them, people whose kindness, strength and experience have changed our lives and made us -- or shown us the way to be -- better persons.

Saints.

People who have taught us something about God's love - in kindnesses shown - love shared and life lived together. Some didn't think they were saints, but that's the way of it: **we're saints to one another, whether we realize it or not.**

We're saints to one another. Whether we realize it or not -- whether we want to be or not -- and most of the time, our own opinion notwithstanding, we are saints to one another. Think about that.

We're saints to one another -- part of an unbroken chain of saints, together with those who came before us and those who will precede us in this place.

And like them, we need to take our place and do our part. To worship, here weekly,

to work, to pray and to give for spread of the kingdom of God. Because that's what saints do.

May God grant you the grace to continue..

Amen.