

Let us pray... Eternal God, gather your Spirit in this place, and open our hearts to love.... Guide our journey together, with you at the center. Amen.

I am an avid lover of clouds and the other morning I was lucky enough to see a very rare cloud formation, the Kelvin-Helmholtz Cloud...

For those not familiar with Kelvin-Helmholtz clouds, they look like breaking waves on an ocean. With a dramatic peak that has just started to curl under... And are lined up in a row one after another, appearing more like a dramatic painting than a cloud.

And I love clouds for many reasons. They are fascinating to look at, they add extra pizzaz to a sunrise or sunset, and they are part of the water cycle which connects all creation...

Clouds are physical examples showing us what has come before is intertwined with what will come after...

Especially since clouds are made up of water. The same water that has been on the earth since it was formed...

Which means the water in the clouds we see is the same water that was around when dinosaurs roamed the earth, when the pyramids were built, and when Jesus walked this earth...

And so, it should come as no surprise then, that the author from Hebrews used the term cloud when referring to the great cloud of witnesses.

As the great cloud of witnesses surrounds us always and never leave us...

And even though we might not be able to see this great cloud of witnesses, we know they are with us in some way shape or form.

Because our faith is intertwined with those who have gone before us...

From Scripture that was first passed on over 10 thousand years ago by word of mouth... To Scripture that was written down, edited, translated, and arranged into what we call the Bible.

And then there are our Creeds, bold faith statements that we say together on Sundays and are a part of every baptism.

These Creeds are from thousands of years ago... These Creeds were discussed, argued, and decided upon by our faith ancestors.

And as Lutherans, we have an important faith ancestor, Martin Luther, who boldly translated the Bible into German, so that his community could read and interpret Scripture...

Which has since diversified the very study of God, and today there are many different types of theology...

Which can be overwhelming, but when we look at the big picture, it simply shows us that the possibilities of interpreting Scripture, and learning about God are endless.

And these possibilities are all birthed from the great cloud of witnesses.

Because you don't live your life in some isolated vacuum. Instead, you are influenced by culture, the books you read, the shows you watch, your upbringing, your current home life, and so on.

Which means that everything we know and understand is based on something greater than ourselves...

And this idea even shows up in our Apostles Creed, when we say, I believe in the communion of Saints...

A phrase we often gloss right over, perhaps without even understanding its depth and meaning...

Believing in the communion of saints means; we believe in all Christ followers... Those who are living and dead. All people, in the past, present, and future.

Because the communion of saints is with us still. Showing up in how we understand God and how we understand ourselves.

Cheering us on as we live a life of faith, knowing that we too will also impact and influence others...

Because it matters how we choose to follow Christ... As we heard at the beginning of the service from Hebrews.

"A great cloud of witnesses is all around us. So let us throw off everything that stands in our way. Let us throw off any sin that holds on to us so tightly. And let us keep on running the race marked out for us."

This life we live is not lived alone. The communion of saints are there to cheer you on and to hold you in faith even when your faith may start to waiver.

Because God has created this vast community. As we heard in our reading from revelation, there was a great multitude gathered from all tribes, peoples, and languages who were gathered around the throne of God.

And we are invited into this community every time we take communion and make our way to Christ's table.

A table that knows no limits and expands beyond time and space.

A table that first came into existence on the night Christ was betrayed...

Where he spoke of the breaking of bread... And the breaking of his body that has been given for you.

Breaking that was not done easily, breaking that was not done without pain.

But breaking that was necessary in order to open the path into everlasting life...

Which is perhaps why our hearts break, when our loved ones die.

Perhaps they break, to break open... Breaking open like Christ did through his resurrection.

Perhaps our hearts break to release our saints into this community of saints...

It may not lessen our heartbreak, but in our heartbreak, we know that God is there.

And we know God is there because the promises have been written down and passed on from all the saints who have gone before us... Who took time to write down the story of Jesus Christ.

A story that has been told again and again. Weaving throughout space and time, cycling and recycling through.

A story that shows up in a cloud, when God guided the Israelites through the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day.

A story that tells of a God who can spring forth water from a rock.

A story that shows up in water when Moses parts the red sea.

A story that shows up in water when Jesus heals at the pools of Bethesda.

A story that shows up in water when Jesus meets the woman at the well.

A story that is lived out in water, as we welcome new saints in baptism.

A story that continues on in Christ's Living water flowing from the throne of God... Amen.