

**Fall Series:** “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

**Series Text:** Jesus says, “Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.” -Luke 12:48

**Sermon #8:** “The Mighty Thor - Living between Heaven and Earth”

**Scriptures:** 1 John 3:1-3, John 13:13-15

**Sermon Text:** 1 Peter 5:5 or Proverbs 16:8

**Source:** Drawing from *Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith*.

**Theme:** Living now in this world and being ready for heaven, pride and humility, living daily among the saints of earth and heaven.

**Wednesday Blurb:** What do we have in common with a Norse thunder god with long blond hair and an enchanted hammer? Consider: Is Thor’s primary loyalty to his heavenly realm of Asgard or to the planet earth? Does he carry himself with the pride and nobility befitting a prince or with the proper humility of someone who knows that others are as special as he is? We do see ourselves in Thor’s tensions. Our identity as followers of Jesus is that we are God’s children and princes and princesses of heaven. Yet we are called to live humble lives of service into the world we live in daily. How do we do that authentically? Come find out this Sunday how you are royalty living in our world.

**Gathering Song** - Sanctify

**Welcome** - Pastor David

**Worship Songs** - Sanctify

**Remembering the Saints** - Andrew

-Reading the names

-Lighting of Candles

**Song** - “For All the Saints”

**Worship Prayer** - Andrew

**Kid’s Invited to Kid’s Church** - Andrew

**Stewardship Moment** - Teresa Gruber

**Video:** Sermon Series Video

**PP#1:** Christians are called to live heroic lives!

1. We are sent to help make the world better
2. We are given the special power of the Holy Spirit
3. We are called to live for truth, justice, and the way of Jesus

Today, it's all Saint's Day, and we remember the superheroes of our faith! These images can be mental pictures for how we can think of those who have lived faithfully in this world: having fought for truth, justice, and the way of Jesus. They have lived heroically, and they did good in our world. They have served God, followed Jesus, and lived by the super power of the Holy Spirit in their lives! Today we remember them because they are not dead, but alive still with Jesus, even though we can't see them any more. We remember them because they encourage us to live our lives heroically: in their example, in their legacy, in every way that gives Jesus the glory.

**PP#2:** *Images for Halloween and All Saint's Day*

Halloween and All Saint's Day are Christian holy days. They are days of celebration! For it is in these two days that Christians mark that evil will not win in our world. I need to hear an "Amen!" on that one. *Evil will not win in our world.* [Amen!] It may seem like it at times, but be of good cheer, our Lord has already defeated evil, and He has overcome the demonic powers of our world! Their time is limited. God wins the battle. And thanks to Jesus, sinners are made saints!

**PP#3:** *Superhero-dressed trick-or-treaters.*

Anybody have superheroes come to their trunks or doors last night? I did! There were lots of very small-looking superheroes coming to me asking for sustenance. And, I'm sorry to report, DC heroes won the night! Well, today, in honor of All Saints' Day, we're looking to the heavens to find our next comic superhero.

**PP#4:** "Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith"

"The Mighty Thor: Living between Heaven and Earth"

"All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'" - 1 Peter 5:5

It's "The Mighty Thor: Living between Heaven and Earth." 1 Peter 5:5 "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

**PP#5:** *Cover from Journey into Mystery #83 (August 1962)*

Stan Lee didn't know how to top the superheroes he had already introduced. But then he heard someone refer to Marvel comics as a modern-day mythology, and that gave him the idea to dig into old mythologies for a new character. He and Jack Kirby chose the Norse god of thunder, and introduced him in 1962. Thor is from Asgard, a planet of immortals. His father, King Odin, gave him an enchanted hammer, which gives him super strength, the power to create storms, control lightening, and fly by throwing and hanging on to his hammer. And he is sent to earth to become its protector.

Thor lives in two worlds. He is immortal in Asgard, and is prince heir to its throne. But on earth, when he puts his hammer down, he is an ordinary person, a doctor, Donald Blake, who works to save lives as a mortal. He has two identities, both equally true and real for him. He is never one without the other. In Asgard, he still has to protect earth. When on earth, he still is a son of Odin.

**PP#6: Heroic Living: Living between Heaven and Earth**

1. We have a dual identity as people of earth and children of God

Galatians 3:26 “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.”

Here’s something that helps us. We, you see, have dual identities, too. We are people on this earth, humble as our lives show. But there’s more to us! When we take Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, we are adopted into God’s family. We receive the inheritance of heaven! We live as citizens of this life, *and* as princes and princesses of God’s realm. We must never forget our connection to the God of heaven! While we are fully present here, there is more to life than what we can see. We are always children of the God of heaven, and we are made in God’s image.

At times we forget how special we are as God’s children. So often in life we feel forgettable, irrelevant. We don’t feel our value or worth. We need to remember our full identity, not just as people of earth, but as children of God! You are holy people, fearfully and wonderfully made. You have a royal identity, daughters and sons of the God of the universe! No matter what this world does to you, it cannot take that away. No matter what you are experiencing right now, don’t ever forget your identity! That is what makes you who you are. That is what makes you *whose* you are! No, we aren’t gods, but we are immortal! And all the problems and troubles of this life will pass away. Don’t let that define you. Let your identity as God’s child define you.

**PP#7: 1 John 3:1-3**

1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.

John the Apostle tells Christians this in 1 John 3. He writes, “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! *And that is what we are!* The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.”

Repeat that part with me, “And that is what we are!” [“And that is what we are!”] I’ll say the sentence before, and you jump in with the second part. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” [“And that is what we are!”] Again! “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” [“And that is what we are!”]

Don’t ever forget that. Don’t ever forget your heavenly identity. Let *that* identity define you!

But John also said at the end, that “All who have this hope in Jesus purify themselves, just as He is pure.” That means that we strive to become the identity God gives us.

**PP#8: Image of Thor fighting the Front Giants or living as a mortal on earth as punishment.**

Now, Thor has an arrogance problem. He is a royal from Asgard, and he has a hard time not seeing himself as more important than others. In the first *Thor* movie that came out in 2011, Thor is presumptuous and goes off and picks a fight with Asgard’s mortal enemies. He violates the peace

accord that his father had established. And, in his arrogance, he does not realize he cannot win the battle. So, Odin has to come to his rescue, and as punishment, he banishes Thor to earth until he learns humility. The hammer sits there, waiting for Thor to become worthy enough to take it up again. Odin then goes into a time of hybernation, and Thor's evil brother, Loki, seizes the opportunity to take over the throne of Asgard. He sends the destroyer, a big, suit of armor that shoots flames out its face, to earthy to kill Thor. The destroyer is walking around, destroying everything and every body. Finally, Thor steps out and faces it alone. He says that the people are innocent, and that he would give his life to save the people of earth. Loki has the destroyer knock him so hard that it kills him. As he is dying, however, his sacrifice shows he has learned humility, and that he has finally become worthy to wield the hammer again. Take a look at this clip from the movie.

**Video Clip:** "Thor Gets Back His Power." (3:45 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCjPBpdlccM>

Thor then defeats the destroyer, and, you guessed it, returns to Asgard and defeats his brother, and puts his father back on the throne.

**PP#9:** Heroic Living: Living between Heaven and Earth

1. We have a dual identity as people of earth and children of God
2. Living in a humble pride

John 13:14-15 "If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: Just as I have done, you also must do."

Thor shows us an example of what it can look like to follow Jesus. Jesus came from heaven and died for the people of earth. He named our value as "worth it." He saw our identity as God's children. On the night He was betrayed, He knelt down, and like a servant, washed their feet. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" ["And that is what we are!"]

This same Jesus then tells His followers to follow His example. Just as we are to never forget our identity as God's children, so we must never forget other people's identities as God's children, either. Jesus is our Savior, and our example. When we follow Him, we follow His lead. That means washing the feet even of those who betray us! What does that look like for you in your life?

We live in the pride of our identity as God's children. This gives us confidence and a boldness to get out there and do what needs doing. We can do it, for we are God's children! At the same time, we live that pride in a balance of humility, that always values others as God's children, too.

A Jewish rabbi once told everyone to carry two stones in their pockets. One stone is to have the inscription, "For my sake the world was created." Inscribed on the other, "I am but dust and ashes." He then said that we should pull out whichever stone we need to remember in the moment.

**PP#10:** *Jack Kirby's illustration of Asgard*

Asgard is so very different than earth. One issue, Thor is asked to describe his homeland. He replies, "How can I describe that which is beyond the ken of mortal understanding?...For the fabled realm itself, there are no words...there is no way...it truly is beyond description!"

**PP#11:** *Images of heaven based on Rev. 21 & 22*

Christians talk like this...well not in old English like Thor. But in terms of describing our homeland. You see, Christians live in two worlds, too. We live daily lives here on earth, with all the dailyness of it all. We live, we work, we play, we try to do good and live heroically. But this world is not our home. We are only here for a while! We are actually citizens of heaven. When we claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we earn the inheritance of life after death, of life in heaven. Like the saints, we will not die, but go to our true home, a home so fantastic that the best descriptions are metaphors. Like Thor said of his homeland, it is beyond the ability of mortal understanding; there are no words for it. The Bible gives images: total peace, total joy, no pain, no sorrow. Everything new. The end of Revelation is best picture we have, and even that is given in symbolism! Christians say of heaven, "You have to see it to believe it!"

We have an inheritance, as my father used to say, "that's outta this world!" But we get to start to enjoy it now. We have the peace that passes understanding. We have a deep, abiding joy that transcends whatever we face on earth. We live with an eye on glory.

But that is no reason to neglect our lives now. Sometimes Christians can get so caught up about our promise of heaven that we can gloss over our lives now. As the phrase goes, "Christians can be so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good!"

**PP#12:** Heroic Living: Living between Heaven and Earth

1. We have a dual identity as people of earth and children of God
2. Living in a humble pride
3. Living between heaven and earth every day

1 Corinthians 15:50 "I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable."

For us to live heroically, our hope for the future calls us into action here in this life. We are called to do God's work right now! Just like how Thor, on earth, serves as it's protector when a superhero, and as a doctor when an ordinary person, so we serve while on earth. In fact, even though we may not have an enchanted weapon, we do have our ordinary abilities, like Donald Blake the doctor, to put to good wherever, and however, we can. Living for heaven means living our daily lives now, spurred on by the vision of heaven, to do little, ordinary things now.

One of my seminary professors of preaching, Fred Craddock, once talked about how when he was young he longed for a day to do something really amazing like you see in the movies. He wanted to make a powerful impact, like the giants of faith he had learned about. He dreamed of one day, when older, to write out a million dollar check to make a big difference. Well, as he told this story, he was older, and couldn't write out a big check like that. But he said that he had written out hundreds of much smaller checks over the years, both in money and in deeds and service.

Most Christians are called to live out their lives heroically every day in small ways. One time, Thor refuses to answer his father's call, and stayed on earth to complete surgery as Dr. Blake. This, he reasoned to himself, was a far more important good than anything he could do as Thor back on Asgard.

We are called to live heroically every day. There may not be much glory in trying our best to be a good friend or a good parent every day. Faithfully doing our jobs to the best of our ability day in and day out may not win us eternal glory in the halls of Asgard. Teaching kids to the best of our

ability, working for justice by how we vote on Tuesday, or helping fix up the home of someone in our neighborhood, may not seem glamorous, but they do have eternal significance.

And here's the good news: we don't have to choose between heaven and earth! We live in both! We have the heavenly blessings while living daily here. God is with us, and we have the special power of the Holy Spirit.

We live as the beloved children of God. Our identity is as a prince or princess of God's realm. Our pride is coupled with humility, and a love for all of God's people. And we live here and now with the blessings of heaven. That's how we can live heroically! And that makes us even mightier than Thor.

**PP#13:** *Fitting image for us to remember that we are children of God!*

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" ["And that is what we are!"]

Amen.

## **Holy Communion**

**Prayers**

**Words of Institution**

**Distribution of the elements**

**Closing Song** - Sanctify

**Announcement & Benediction** - David

Vote

Wed.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR NOV. 1, 2015

**Fall Series:** “Marvelous Myths: Marvel Superheroes and Everyday Faith”

**Sermon #8:** “The Mighty Thor - Living between Heaven and Earth”

**Scripture:** 1 John 3:1-3 and John 13:13-15

Opening prayer

Introductions: Introduce yourself and share about a time you changed how you treated someone because you remembered they were God’s child, too.

Context: Look at 1 John 3. What is going on near and around verses 1-3?

Read: 1 John 3:1–3

1. Verse 1. Share from a time in your life when you were “sleepwalking” through life, not living as though you were a child of God. How did you wake up?

2. Verse 2. According to this verse, why can we not know now fully what our inheritance will be?

3. Verse 2. What do we know now?

4. Verse 2. Share about a time when you felt especially close to God, and that you knew in your heart that you were His child.

5. Verse 3. What does it mean to purify ourselves?

6. As God’s child, what are some of the great things you can do for God this week?

Read John 13:13-15

8. What do the surrounding verses tell you about what is going on?

9. What does it mean to “go and do this, too”?

10. Are there times you are tempted to retreat from the world into a Christian counterculture? Is it ever OK to do so? When does it become a problem?

11. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?