

GOD'S PROPHETS



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Cross Year—Primary, Unit I
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Amos was a prophet of justice.

CHAPTER 1

Amos

The people of Israel had lived in peace for some time. They grew wealthy and forgot about loving God and their neighbors. They did not care for the poor. They were not fair in their dealings with others.

In the southern kingdom of Judah lived a shepherd named Amos. He was from the town of Tekoa. He spent his days caring for his flock and looking after the sycamore trees. These trees had fruit something like figs. Amos would gather the fruit and cut off the dead branches.

One day, while Amos was with the sheep, God called to him: "Go, prophesy to my people Israel." God wanted Amos to tell them that they were doing wrong.

The shepherd traveled twenty-five miles into the kingdom of Israel. He warned the people. He told them that they had dangerous enemies in the north. He told them to repent and turn to the ways of the Lord.

“God does not like your parties and your sacrifices to other gods! You should take care of the poor and feed the hungry,” Amos cried.

The people hated what Amos was saying. They wanted him to go away. One of their priests named Amaziah said to Amos, “Go back to Judah! Tell those people about God’s judgment. We don’t want to listen to a prophet like you.”

Amos answered, “I am not a prophet. My father was not a prophet. I am just a shepherd. I take care of sycamore trees. I am here because God called me.”

He said, “If you do not listen to me, many people will die. Your land will be taken away. You will go to live in a land of strangers.”

Amos told the people of Israel many more things. He shared the visions God had shown to him. He said the day would come when the land would not belong to the people of Israel.

When Amos had told the people all that God had said, he went home.

We can read about Amos in the Old Testament.

CHAPTER 2

Isaiah

Some time after Amos preached to the people of Israel, God called another prophet. His name was Isaiah, and he was the son of a prophet.

When Isaiah was twenty-five years old, he had a vision. Isaiah saw God sitting on a high throne. Above the throne were the seraphs. These heavenly creatures had six wings. Two wings covered their faces. Two wings covered their feet. They flew with the other two wings. The creatures called to one another. They said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.”

Isaiah was frightened. He said, “I am not good enough to stand before God. I must be going to die. I live among sinful people. My mouth is unclean.”

One of the seraphs flew to Isaiah, holding a live coal. The seraph touched the coal to Isaiah’s lips and said, “Your sins have left you.” Isaiah felt clean and forgiven.



Isaiah spoke words of hope.

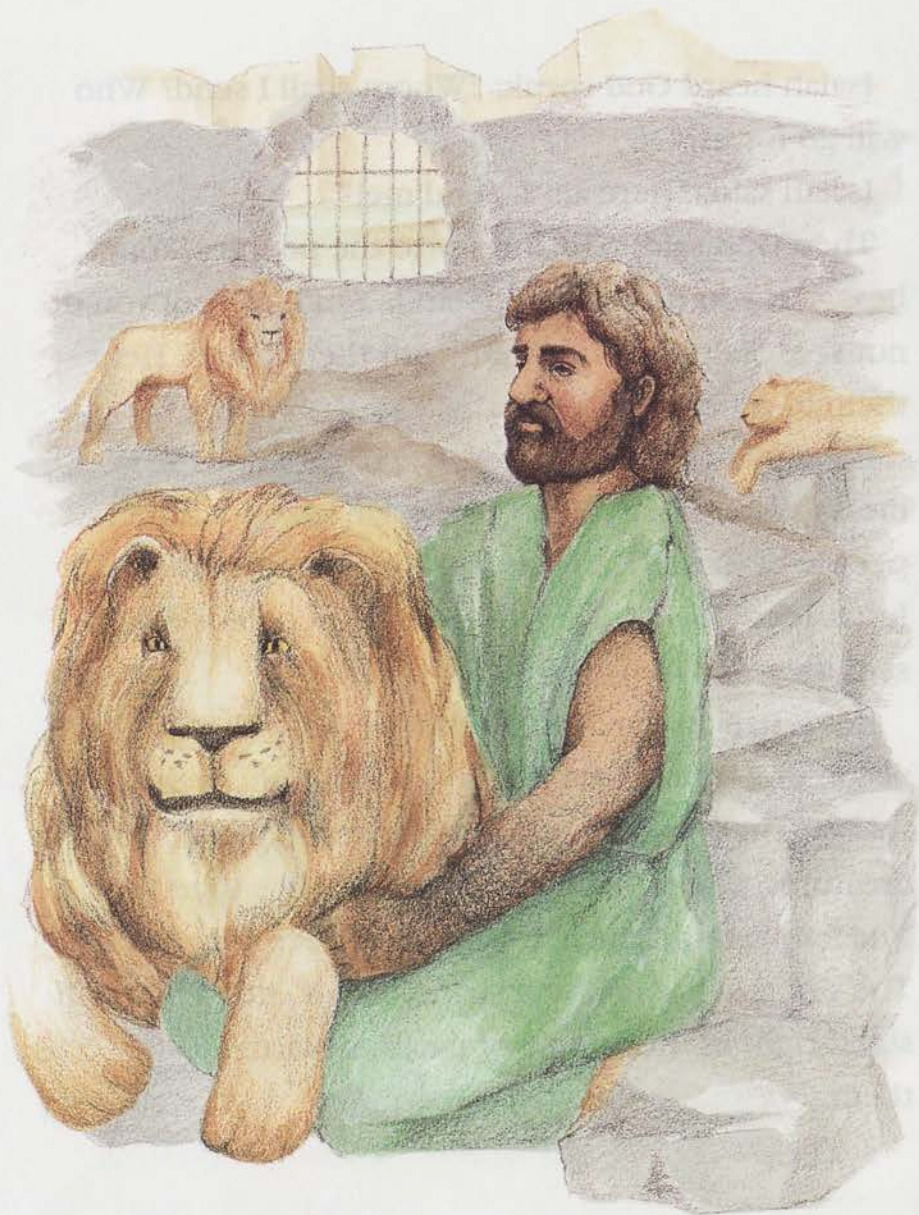
Isaiah heard God speak: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"

Isaiah said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Then God said, "Go and say to the people, 'You hear, but you do not understand. You look, but you do not see.' Help them to listen with their hearts. Help them to repent and be healed."

Isaiah did as the Lord God asked. He told God's message to the people of Judah. He called on the people of Jerusalem to repent. He said that all of Jerusalem would be destroyed. The people would be sent away.

But Isaiah also spoke about hope. He wrote his vision of a future time when God will rule over all things. There will be peace and love among all God's creatures. The wolf and the lamb will live together. The leopard and the baby goat will sleep side by side. The calf and the lion will share food. A little child will stand right in the middle of the animals and lead them.



Daniel was saved from the lions.

CHAPTER 3

Daniel

Long ago, Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. He asked that certain young men of Israel be brought to the king's palace. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were chosen. They were given new names and taught to speak the Chaldean language.

God gave the men knowledge and skill. They learned quickly. Daniel was able to understand dreams. When the king had a dream, Daniel would tell what it meant.

After some time, Nebuchadnezzar died. Darius was made the new king. Darius liked Daniel and gave him many gifts. Daniel became a rich man, and Darius gave him an important position in the kingdom.

Some of the other leaders were jealous of Daniel. They wanted to kill him, but how could they do it? At last, they thought of a way. They said, "Daniel prays to his God three times a day. We pray to the king. Let us write a law and get the king to sign it. The law will say, 'For the next thirty days, everyone will pray only

to the king.' Anyone who breaks the law will be thrown into the lion's den."

They wrote the law, and the king signed it. "This will be the end of Daniel," the leaders said to one another.

After the king signed the law, the wicked plotters waited outside Daniel's house. They wanted to catch him praying to God. Daniel was faithful. He continued to pray to God three times a day. He did not pray to the king at all.

His enemies said, "Daniel has broken the king's law. He must be thrown into the lion's den."

King Darius did not know the law was a trick to catch Daniel. He did not want the lions to kill this good man. But now there was no choice, for Daniel had broken a law! Daniel was cast into the den with the hungry lions.

The den was sealed shut. All night the king worried about Daniel. He prayed that Daniel's God would save him. Darius stayed awake and fasted.

Early the next morning, King Darius hurried to the lion's den and opened the sealed gate. Daniel walked out alive! He was not hurt at all! "God sent an angel," Daniel said. "The angel shut the mouths of the lions. The lions have not hurt me."

CHAPTER 4

Elijah

The people of Israel had forgotten God. Ahab, their king, was married to Jezebel. Jezebel worshiped strange gods called Baal and Asherah. Soon, all the people were beginning to worship these gods.

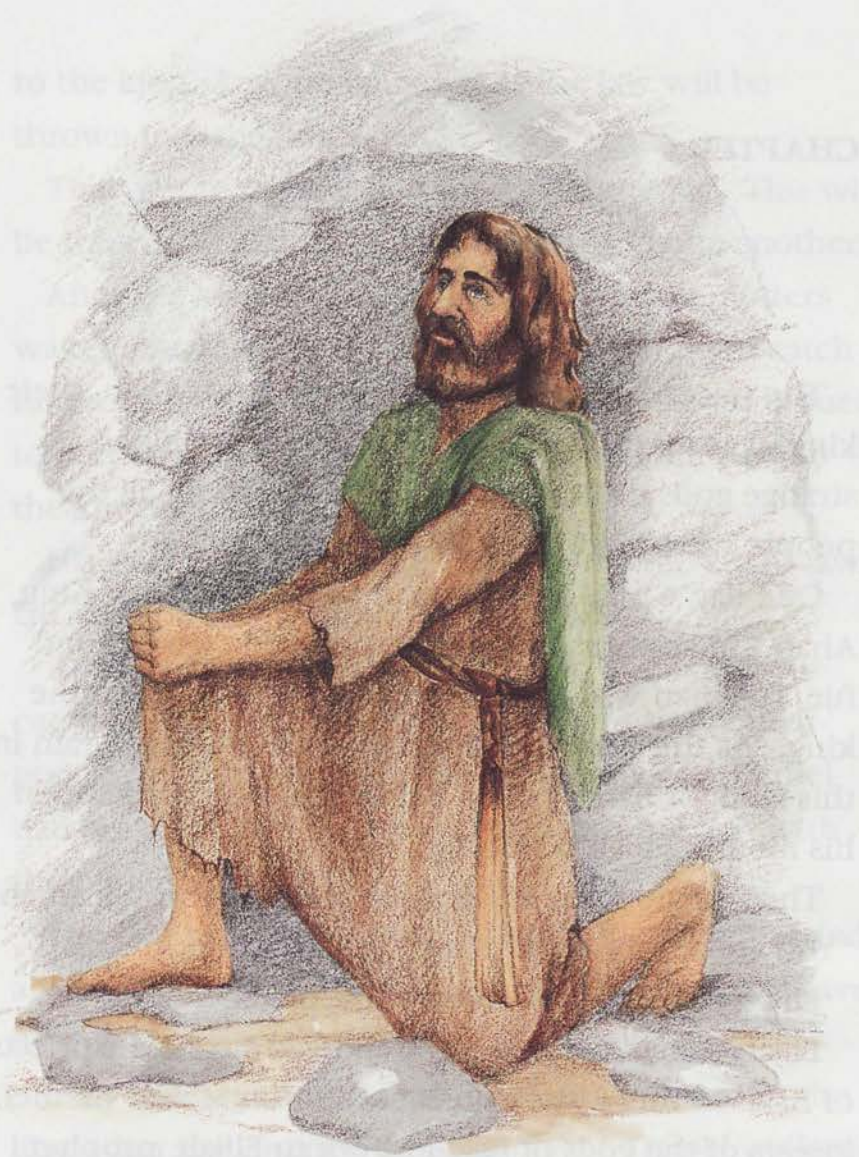
One day, a wild-looking man stood in front of King Ahab. He appeared suddenly, dressed in leather and fur. The man was Elijah the Tishbite. He warned the king, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, it will not rain in this land for many years." Before the king could open his mouth, Elijah was gone.

Three years later, Elijah again stood in front of Ahab. "You are a troubler of Israel," the king said.

Elijah replied, "I do not trouble Israel. You do!"

Elijah demanded that he be allowed to test the priests of Baal. So there was a great contest on Mount Carmel. Priests of the gods of Baal lost out to Elijah, prophet of the one true God. The priests of Baal were killed.

Queen Jezebel was very angry. She sent a message to Elijah: "By tomorrow you will be dead, too."



Elijah heard God in a still, small voice.

Elijah ran away in fear. After walking all day, he sat down under a bush in the desert. He was very tired. He begged God to let him die, right there. Soon Elijah fell asleep. Then an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." When he looked, there were food and water by his head. The angel brought food and water a second time.

Elijah woke up, ate the food, and continued his journey. He walked all the way to the mountain where God had given Moses the Ten Commandments.

Elijah spent the night in a cave. He heard a voice say, "Go and stand before the Lord."

Elijah stood at the mouth of the cave. There was a great wind, but God was not in the wind. There was a great earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. There was a great fire, but God was not in the fire.

As Elijah stood with his head covered, God came to him in a still, small voice. "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God asked.

Elijah answered, "I have done all I can, and now they want to kill me."

God answered, "Return. You shall anoint new kings. Elisha shall take your place."

Elijah was faithful to God. When it was time, he was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot.

CHAPTER 5

Jeremiah

When Jeremiah was a boy, Josiah was king. Josiah was a good man who was faithful to God.

Josiah was killed in a battle, and his sons became kings. They were not faithful to God.

God called Jeremiah and said, "Before you were born, I knew you. I blessed you. I made you my prophet."

When Jeremiah heard God speak, he said, "Lord God, I cannot speak for you. No one will listen. I am only a youth."

But God said to Jeremiah, "Do not say you are only a youth. You will go where I send you. You will say what I tell you to say. Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

God touched Jeremiah's mouth and said, "I have put my words in your mouth." Then God sent Jeremiah to preach to the nations.

Jeremiah preached God's word in many ways. He

tried to show the people what would happen if they did not repent. One time, he took a clay pot and broke it into many pieces. He said, "This is what will happen to your city."

Another time, Jeremiah walked around Jerusalem with an oxen yoke around his neck. He told the people, "You must surrender to the king of Babylon."

The priests grew angry at Jeremiah. He was beaten and put in the stocks overnight. Jeremiah did not stop telling the people to repent and to do God's will. The angry priests convinced the king to arrest Jeremiah. He was cast into a muddy cistern (a hole in the ground to hold water). Here he was left to die.

The king did not want this prophet to die. He sent a servant to pull Jeremiah up out of the cistern. Jeremiah stayed in the king's courtyard under arrest. When the King of Babylon captured the city, Jeremiah escaped to Egypt.



Jeremiah told the people to repent.



Jonah ran away from God.

CHAPTER 6

Jonah

God said, "Jonah, get up. Go to Nineveh, the great city. Tell the people to repent." Jonah arose and looked around. "Not I!" he said to himself, and he hurried down the road in the opposite direction.

When Jonah got to the city of Joppa, by the sea, he found a ship. The ship was going to Tarshish. Jonah thought that would be far enough away from Nineveh, so he bought a ticket. He got on the ship, went down into the hold, and fell asleep. He thought he was safe from God.

God sent a wind to blow great waves on the sea and cause a mighty storm. The sailors were afraid. They threw boxes over the side to make the ship lighter. It did not help. They prayed loudly to their gods. The storm got worse.

The captain found Jonah sleeping right through the storm. "Wake up! Pray to your God so that we will not all die," the captain shouted.

Jonah told the sailors that the storm was his fault. He told them to throw him over the side of the boat. The

sailors wanted to avoid such an act, so they tried to row the ship to the shore. The sea grew rougher and rougher. Finally, they threw Jonah into the raging sea. The storm stopped at once.

Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. He stayed in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. On the fourth day, the fish spewed Jonah out on the beach. As he rested on the sand, Jonah heard God again, "Get up. Go to Nineveh, and tell the people to repent."

This time, Jonah obeyed God. He traveled for three days. When he arrived in Nineveh, he told the people, "In forty days, God will overthrow this city!"

The people listened. The king made an order. All the people in Nineveh put on sackcloth and covered themselves with ashes. This was a sign of their repentance. Every person and every animal fasted. Everyone prayed.

Jonah went outside the city to see what would happen. When he saw what the people were doing, he was angry. Why had they all repented? He prayed, "God, let me die."

God made a plant to grow over Jonah and give shade from the hot sun. Jonah was thankful. The next day God caused a worm to eat the plant. Jonah was very sad. Again, he asked to die.

God tried to help Jonah understand. He said, "You had pity for the plant that died. Is it not right for me to take pity on the people of Nineveh who have repented? I have spared them."

CHAPTER 7

Nehemiah and Ezra

The king of Babylon conquered the land of Judah. The city of Jerusalem was in ruins. Many people were led away from their homes, just as the prophets had said. For many years, they lived in a strange land.

After a very long time, Cyrus became king of Babylon. He said, "The people of Judah may go back to Jerusalem. They are to rebuild the house of God. They may take the gold and silver vessels that were removed from the temple."

A large group made the long journey of eight hundred miles. When they came to Jerusalem, they had to build houses. It took twenty years before the temple was finished. But the walls of the city were still broken down.

Back in Babylon, a new king named Artaxerxes had a Jewish cupbearer named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was very sad about Jerusalem. The king decided to send Nehemiah to that city. He made him the governor.



Nehemiah helped to rebuild Jerusalem.

Ezra read the law of God aloud.

Nehemiah saw the ruined walls and the gates that had been destroyed by fire. Nehemiah took charge. He called the people together, saying, "We will rebuild the walls and the gates."

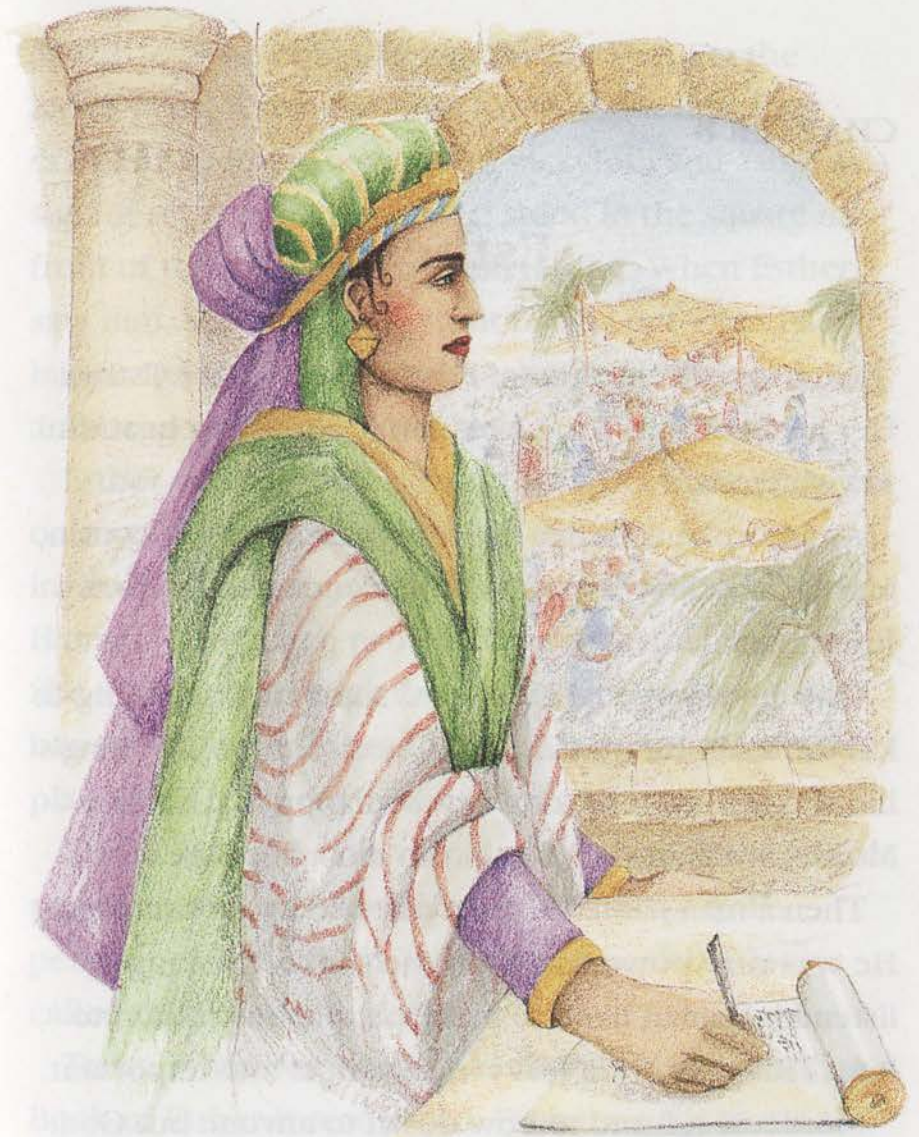
All the people worked hard, night and day. Enemies opposed them the whole time, but the work went on. The walls were strong again. The gates were like new. It was all finished in just fifty-two days!

Later, a priest named Ezra came to Jerusalem. He was a teacher who knew God's laws. He wanted to help the people to learn again how to worship God.

At a proper time, Nehemiah and Ezra called the people together. Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses. He read from morning to midday. Everyone listened. Ezra finished reading. The people were crying because they had heard these precious words from God.

Nehemiah said, "This is the day of the Lord. Do not cry. Rejoice."

For seven days, the people kept the Feast of the Booths, which they had heard about from the reading. Ezra read the book of the law of God from the first day until the last day. The last day was a holy gathering.



Esther saved her people from death.

CHAPTER 8

Esther

Long ago, in the land of Persia, lived Queen Esther. Her husband was King Ahasuerus. She was a beautiful Jewish woman.

As an orphan, Esther had been raised by her cousin, Mordecai, who was a devout Jew and an exile from Jerusalem.

One day, Mordecai overheard some men planning to kill the king. He quickly told Queen Esther. The king's life was spared. The king was so happy that he had Mordecai's name written in the records of the court.

Then a man named Haman came to live at the court. He was very powerful. When he spoke, the king listened. Haman liked to make people bow down to him. This made him feel even stronger and important.

Mordecai refused to bow down to anyone but God. Haman became angry. His anger at Mordecai caused him to plot against all the Jews. He wanted to kill them.

Haman tricked the king into signing an order to kill

all the Jews as a punishment for not keeping the king's laws. When the Jews heard about this, they cried out in fear. They put on sackcloth and ashes as a sign of repentance. Mordecai stood in the square in front of the palace, crying and fasting. When Esther saw him, she sent her servant to find out what had happened. Mordecai told her about Haman's evil plan and begged her to tell the king.

Esther was afraid. She fasted for three days, then put on royal robes and went to see the king. Esther invited the king to join her for dinner and to bring Haman. The Queen provided a wonderful banquet. She invited them back the next night. At the second banquet, Queen Esther told the king about Haman's plan to kill her people, the Jews.

The king heard Esther's plea. The lives of the Jewish people were saved, and Haman was hanged. The people celebrated with great joy at a celebration called the Feast of Purim.

Today, when Jewish people observe this festival, the Book of Esther is read aloud. Each time the name of Haman is said, the whole gathering stamp their feet and make noise.

CHAPTER 9

All Saints

On November 1 each year, the Church celebrates the Feast of All Saints. We remember all God's faithful servants who lived in times past. The names of faithful Christians are on the Church Calendar. They are wonderful examples of men and women who served Jesus Christ.

We remember also the Hebrew people whose stories we tell again and again.

Elijah showed his faith in God by standing up to King Ahab and challenging the priests of Baal. His faith was rewarded as he was carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were faithful as they warned the people to repent and return to the Lord. They kept on sharing the word of God even in the face of danger from their enemies.

Nehemiah and Ezra showed their faith in God by returning to Jerusalem. There they rebuilt the city's



At the Feast of All Saints,
we remember all God's servants.

walls and restored the customs of Hebrew worship.

Esther was faithful to God and her people. She prayed and fasted, hoping that God would help her find a way to save their lives. Because of Esther's faithfulness, the Jews celebrate Purim each year.

Jonah came to understand that God was faithful to him even after he tried to run away. He also learned that God is faithful to those who ask forgiveness, even if they are not Jews.

Daniel's faith in God was rewarded when an angel protected him from the lions.

We rejoice on All Saints' Day because we, too, belong with God's saints. When we were baptized and marked as Christ's own forever, we joined the great company of God's faithful people. We share our faith with others by serving God in the Church, by teaching others about Jesus, and by participating in Holy Eucharist.

We are faithful to God when we read the Bible and pray. And we show our faith when we treat others with love and kindness wherever we go.