



ALL SAINTS DAY

All Saints Day

November 01, 2020
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

ALL SAINTS DAY

Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



In our first reading from chapter 7 of the Revelation to John, John had already heard the names of the sealed sons of Israel – the so-called [^]144,000 Israelites – 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes – who had the seal of GOD on their foreheads – and then sees the fulfilment in the New Testament. He sees a multitude **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.** GOD has rescued them from wrath through the blood of the Lamb – as we are told in verse 14. They wear the WHITE ROBES – symbols of victory and purity – of victorious martyrs. These two groups described in this chapter are different. The first group being the 144,000 people mentioned earlier; and the 2nd being the multitude seen at the beginning of our passage today. This multitude being that promised to Abraham where it was

described as being greater than the number of grains of sand on the seashore or the number of stars in the sky. Believers come through their times of suffering by remaining loyal to GOD. Because they remain faithful, GOD will give them eternal life with Him.

It is difficult to imagine how blood could make any cloth white, but the blood of JESUS CHRIST is the greatest purifier because it removes the stain of sin. White symbolises sinless perfection or holiness – which can be given to people only by the death of the sinless Lamb of GOD on our behalf.

GOD will provide for His children's needs in their eternal home where there will be no hunger, thirst, or pain, and He will wipe away all tears. When we are suffering or torn apart by sorrow, we need to take comfort in this promise of complete protection and relief.

In verses 1-8 we see the 144,000 believers receiving a seal to protect them through a time of great tribulation and suffering. In verses 9-17 we see the believers finally

with GOD in heaven. All who have been faithful through the ages are singing before GOD's throne. Their tribulations and sorrows are over: no more tears for sin – for all sins are forgiven; no more tears for suffering, for all suffering is over; no more tears for death, for all believers have been resurrected to die no more.

In our passage from the first letter of John, we are reassured, as believers, that our self-worth is based on the fact that GOD loves us and calls us His children. We are His children NOW, not just some time in the distant future. Knowing that we are His children should encourage us to live as JESUS did. We are also told that we are members of GOD's family, that we are becoming reflections of GOD. As Christians, we gradually become more and more like CHRIST. This process will not be complete until we can see JESUS face-to-face – but, knowing that this is our ultimate destiny should motivate us to purify ourselves. To purify means to keep morally straight, free from the corruption of sin. GOD also

purifies us, but there is action we must take to remain morally fit. ^In 1 Timothy 5:22 we are told not to participate in the sins of others. James 4:8 tells us to “Draw near to GOD and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded.

We all have certain anchors that keep us in check throughout our lives. There may be a member of our family we consider to be our anchor – someone who loves us no matter what and who is always there to keep us on track. We may have a certain job to do that keeps us grounded in our lives. We may have a certain place we like to go to that brings us peace. In tumultuous times, such as those we are going through this year, certain anchors may become less stable than they may otherwise be. Many people have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Many people have been separated from other family members or friends and communities upon which they have come to rely. Simple pleasures of

life – whatever they may be – have been interrupted by the pandemic this year. Life as we knew it has changed. For us to be able to have a cuppa after Church means that we need to fill out some forms and apply to have our COVID status with the Diocese changed and approved and then to have individually wrapped servings of food with our cuppa that has been prepared in a sterile environment with the person wearing a facemask and gloves – all within half an hour! What about blowing the candles out on a birthday cake?

Another, more sustainable anchor is GOD. Through regular prayer, bible reading study and meditation, He is always available to steer us along the right course.

The Reverend Layton Williams from the United States of America wonders what the future will hold.

She says: “Only time will tell us. But these verses remind us that even in a world upended, unhinged, uncertain, and unwieldy, we have not lost every anchor. Indeed, we have not entirely lost our families and friends and

communities, nor our capacity for small and simple pleasure. Perhaps in many ways, we are even discovering new avenues to these things, new lines to tie to them in new ways. Perhaps we are merely simplifying what it is that we rely on and take comfort in. Regardless, as the text says, one truth remains steadfast and invincible: we are children of God. We know God and are known by God and claimed in love by God. No pandemic, no worldly upheaval can change that fact. Ultimately, our hope doesn't lie in the anchors of this world, not in the markers of the old normal, and not even in our families and communities. Our hope is rooted in the knowledge of whose we are. When Christ is in our midst, when the Holy Spirit is at work in and around and through us—even in the midst of chaos, we will recognize them and can find comfort in them, along with a calling to follow the way of God's love into whatever future world awaits us.”

And isn't that just a little bit of how JESUS approaches the Beatitudes in our Gospel passage for today. They describe GOD's Kingdom as being completely different to the world we live in. Our Gospel for today is sometimes used as one of the readings at a funeral for a person who was their own man or woman – not someone who just fell in behind all the rest and did what the world wanted them to do.

The Reverend Angus Ritchie, a British theologian and ordained Priest puts it this way: “The “blessedness” that the Beatitudes pronounce is not the fruit of moral heroism, but of the life of Christ “passing over” into his followers. As Christians, we are called to be saints and not heroes. Heroes are always the central figure in the story of their deeds. The saint, on the other hand, “is just a small character in a story that is always fundamentally about God” (Samuel Wells, in Rupert Shortt's *God's Advocates*).

“The reason that the world does not know us”, John writes, “is that it did not know him.” The saints reveal to us a God whose character is quite different from our worldly fantasies of glory and dominion. The Beatitudes describe a series of qualities — poverty, meekness, undergoing persecution — which the world sees as signs of weakness and failure. Yet these are the qualities made manifest in Jesus’s earthly life, and in the lives of his saints.

To glimpse the presence of Christ in hunger and thirst, desolation and mourning — and in the “meekness” and poverty of spirit which this world despises — is to begin to apprehend the promise of a different world, [^]in which he is “all in all” (Colossians 3.11). For Christ, who is present in their suffering as a sacrificial lamb, is also the shepherd who will “guide them to springs of the water of life” — and who leads them back to the Father, who will, in the words of our reading from Revelation today, “wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7.17).



We are all reasonably familiar with the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel – but do we really have a close look at what they say? For example, what about verse 10 which says: “¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Are we happy when we are persecuted? Do we bless those who insult us? We always look to where the so-called persecuted Church is to give examples of such practices. But what about in our own environments? Such holiness can sometimes be found closer to home. Parents who continue to care for selfish and difficult children – always hoping for change – live with a form of persecution. Others who remain kind to demanding and problematic parents or neighbours live under abuse. It is this holiness, this ordinary holiness that we celebrate on this All Saints Day.



May we pray:

In Your abundant providence, O GOD, you have chosen holy men and holy women to be examples of the mercy and the sacrificial love of your Son, JESUS CHRIST. May we strive to imitate Your holiness and follow the same LORD, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen

Life Application Study Bible

GOD's Word 2020

Daily Prayer 2020

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/30-october/faith/sunday-s-readings/all-saints-day>