



## **All saints**

Last Wednesday was designated by the church as 'All Saints day' – the day after Halloween and I thought it might be helpful to reflect on what that means for us today.

### **In the Lord I'll be ever thankful Taizé worship song**

*In the Lord I'll be ever thankful*

*In the Lord I will rejoice*

*Look to God do not be afraid.*

*Lift up your voices the Lord is here.*

*Lift up your voices the Lord is here.*

*Repeat 7 times.*

## **Prayers**

Compassionate God, we come to you this morning, our hearts broken by the news from a world in pain, people living under the threat of death through war and hatred. We come to you longing for peace, peace for all who are suffering and longing for wisdom for leaders. May your kingdom of love overcome evil.

Almighty God, we rest on your promises that you are with us and will comfort and bless us as we seek to follow the ways of Jesus.

We thank you for the life and ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection and the promise of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us each and every day.

To you be all honour, glory and praise.

Forgiving God, we come to you knowing that in our hearts we often fail to love, fail to help those who need it, forgive us and help us do better during this coming week.

Silence to reflect.

Hear now the words of grace, your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lord's prayer'

## **All Saints day An Introduction**

All Saints Day grew out of the early church's practice of remembering the martyrs of the church. By the late 300s general observance of a day to honour all Saints was in place. Many followers of the new way of Jesus had been brutally killed, some crucified, some in the Roman arena for sport. They were seen as the martyrs. By the mid-700s, All Saints Day became connected with November 1. With a link to the autumn harvest festival celebration, on 31 October, ( Samhain) marking the change of seasons and the approach of winter. This led to Hallowe'en, a shortened form of "All Hallows' Evening" before 'All Hallows Day', when saints (hallows) and martyrs are remembered by people of many Christian denominations.

Today with the influence from the USA and 'trick or treating' Halloween has become a very different evening to the one where many Christian believers would have spent the evening in prayer remembering the saints.

The Hebrew and Greek words translated “Saints” are **those who are set apart. Set apart not by the individual’s goodness but by God’s calling and goodness.**

So who are the saints for us to remember today? I was born in

St Cuthbert’s Cross.



County Durham so the stories of Aiden, Cuthbert and Bede and their time on Lindisfarne – Holy Island are well known to me.

St Cuthbert, followed St Aiden as a monk on Lindisfarne and is buried in Durham Cathedral. C. 634 – 687. He was set apart, after a military career to be instrumental in developing the Christian faith throughout Northumbria before being set apart in a more physical sense by retiring to be a hermit in an island just off the Northumbrian coast near Bamburgh. After his death numerous miracles were attributed to him as people prayed near his body. To prevent the

Danes taking his body his coffin was carried throughout the North East finally coming to rest at Durham, Thus founding the city and its cathedral.

Today people are still being recognised as saints by the Roman Catholic church for the work of God they have been engaged in and set apart for. You may have heard of Mother Teresa, serving in Calcutta and Oscar Romero in San Salvador – Bishop shot while he was preaching and serving amongst the poor. Are just two that come to mind.

In Scripture we read in Paul’s letters to the new churches in Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus talks about being thankful for the saints – this is everyone who is seeking to follow the ways of Jesus.

So in that sense people who have been called by God, who have become disciples, ordinary people like you and me – have become the saints of God today. Set apart because of our knowledge of and acceptance of following and believing in the way of Jesus . Set apart to ‘be’ and to ‘behave’; act out our beliefs.

How are we to ‘be’ as saints. The passage all Christian denominations give to read on All Saints day is

### **Matthew 5: 1-13**

**5** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek,  
For they shall inherit the <sup>[a]</sup>earth.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed *are* the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup> Blessed *are* the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.

<sup>10</sup> Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is what the kingdom of God looks like. Filled with peace makers, mercy, forgiveness, the poor. The meek, the righteous those facing persecution for revealing a different way of living in a complicated world. being righteous, seeking the kingdom of God. Can you see the way you live somewhere in that list?

The biggest statement to me, faced with the world situations at the moment is this one, “ Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God”.

Let's pause for a few moments are pray for peace in the Middle East, in Ukraine, in all places of war and discontent.

We lift your hurting world to you and pray for peace, justice and wisdom. Amen. Space for silence.

### **Hymn – Make me a channel of your peace**

Make me a channel of Your peace  
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love  
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord  
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

*Oh master, grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood as to understand  
To be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of Your peace  
Where there's despair in life, let me bring  
hope  
Where there is darkness, only light  
And where there's sadness ever joy

*Oh master, grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console  
To be understood as to understand  
To be loved as to love with all my soul*

Make me a channel of Your peace  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
In giving to all men that we receive  
And in dying that we're born into eternal life

The saints in scripture are those who are seen as heroes in the way that they have lived their lives in following God's purposes. In Hebrews we have the list including Abraham, Moses, a number of prophets and martyrs like Gideon, Sampson, Jeremiah and Isaiah. Many more. And in the new testament people who are following Jesus.

### **Hebrews 12: 1-2**

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who, for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat ta the right hand of the throne of God. NRSV**

People running the race of life. A journey, following Jesus. Jesus provides a map – a plan – up to us to decide how we will follow it. A bit like the *Celebrity Race for life* that was on the TV last month. They were given a target town to travel to, so much money to spend, and possibilities of working to earn money to be able to travel in more luxury. How they did it was up to each couple. The letters to the early church in the New Testament provide a map for us to follow in our race for life. I've chosen the next reading as just one example of our guidelines.

## Philippians 3: 8-9

**Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learnt and received and heard and seen in me and the God of peace will be with you.**

Keep on doing the things Paul had taught them but to also think and reflect on their lives. Things that are honourable, pure, bring justice, this is our calling. To live like this is the life of a saint.

Probably most of us will never see ourselves as saints but I am confident that we are all trying – seeking to win that race. Ultimately as we have read in Matthew's gospel we are blessed as we live our lives. We thank God for that blessing and we acknowledge our continued need of God's help.

### **Hymn - Guide me O Thou great Jehovah**

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more;  
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;  
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death and hell's Destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee;  
I will ever give to Thee.

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Turn our thoughts now to those saints that we have known that are no longer with us – people we have loved and are now eternally a cloud of witnesses surround us. People who have been set apart for service of others to be a part of the kingdom of God.

**Gracious God, we come in awe and wonder that you need ordinary people like us to share in your purposes on this earth. We give you thanks for the saints who have made a difference in our lives, to our journey as disciples with you. We remember with thanks our family, our friends, our teachers and leaders, who have meant so much to us over the years.**

**We remember their honesty, their compassion, their wisdom, their humour, their faith.**

**We remember them in love and gratitude and name them in our hearts.**

**We also come before you today to thank you for the saints that are alongside us today as we run the race before us. We name them in our hearts and ask your blessing on them today.**

**Give us the courage to remain true to the ways of Jesus as we live through the coming days.**

**In Jesus name we pray.**

**Amen**

## **Hymn - God's Spirit is in my heart**

God's Spirit Is In My Heart  
He Has Called Me And Set Me Apart.  
This Is What I Have To Do,  
What I Have To Do

### ***Chorus***

***He Sent Me To Give The Good News To  
The Poor  
Tell Prisoners That They Are Prisoners No  
More  
Tell Blind People That They Can See  
And Set The Down Trodden Free  
And Go Tell Everyone The News That The  
Kingdom Of God Has Come  
And Go Tell Everyone  
The News That God's Kingdom Has Come.***

Just As The Father Sent Me  
So I'm Sending You Out To Be,  
My Witnesses Throughout The World,  
The Whole Of The World

### ***Chorus***

Don't Carry A Load In Your Pack,  
You Don't Need Two Shirts On Your Back  
A Workman Can Earn His Own Keep,  
Can Earn His Own Keep

### ***Chorus***

Don't Worry What You Have To Say,  
Don't Worry Because On That Day  
God's Spirit Will Speak In Your Heart  
Will Speak In Your Heart

### ***Chorus***

## **Blessing**

As we have been blessed by God may we go out and be a blessing to others.  
Amen.