

Circuit Service for Sunday 1st November 2020 – ALL SAINTS DAY

Welcome to worship today. As you share in this service, know that you gather in worship with others and in the presence of God. Take time now to still your heart, to give to God the cares and concerns of this day so you can focus in this time. Know yourself loved and held by God as you prepare to worship.

For our Call to Worship this morning we share in the first verse of Psalm 103:

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

On this All Saints Day we praise His Holy name with our first hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy”– and verse 4 reminds us that as we praise, we do so alongside “all the saints”.

StF 11/ H and P 7 Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwuDSw-9cUQ>

1

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

2

Holy, holy, holy!
All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around
the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before
thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3

Holy, holy, holy!
Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may
not see,
only thou art holy;
there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

4

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth
and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber
(1783–1826) (alt.)

Opening Prayers

Eternal God we come before you this day in worship and praise. You alone are holy, worthy of all the praise and blessing and honour we can give. We praise you for that is what you created us to do – to worship you with our lips and with our lives. We praise you for your very nature is to love and you lavish your love upon us. Your grace and generosity Lord are amazing; we praise you for as we have just sung, you are “perfect in power, in love and purity”.

Loving Lord, this day as we praise you, we are conscious of how we often fail to praise you, in thought and word and deed. Through our action or inaction, through the things we say or fail to say, we do not cry “Holy, Holy, Holy”. In a moment of quietness now, we ask your forgiveness.

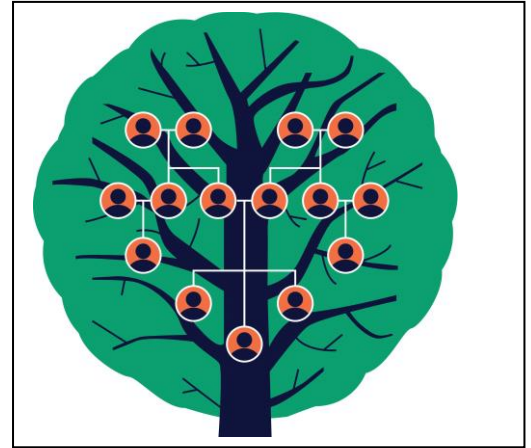
SHORT TIME OF SILENCE

Lord, thank you that in Jesus you came to bring healing and reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration. May each one of us know this day and hear for ourselves, that our sins are forgiven. By your Holy Spirit, so lead us Lord we pray that, strengthened in your power we may follow in the steps of all the saints who have gone before us and journey on until we see you face to face in your glory. We make this prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus, who taught his first disciples to pray...

Our Father...

Reflection

My Mum's Dad – my maternal grandfather- loved history. He has been especially on my mind in the last week because many schools have been on half-term. As a youngster each half-term meant exciting travel to visit both sets of grandparents in West London. Each visit included a day out – just me and my Grandad - to do something historical. We walked miles around museums, towers, war rooms, parliament, cathedrals. You name it, we covered it. But Grandad was also interested in local history and family history. He devoted many hours, before the Internet made it somewhat easier, to tracing the family history along his father's line back to the 17th century, putting together the family tree. He loved collecting information about those who had 'gone before', finding out about their jobs, locations, and family groupings.



Today is All Saints Day where we especially remember those who have gone before us, including those given the 'official' title of Saint by the Church but who do not have their own individual Saints Day. We also remember other 'saints' who have gone before us in the Christian faith, those who have inspired and nurtured us in our faith journeys from within our immediate family and our wider Church family – those who form part of our 'family tree' of faith. None of you will know 'saint Lily' but she remains a pivotal part of my faith journey. I first met her when I was 2 years old and she died when I was 11 (more than 3 decades ago) but her impact on me was enormous. The same is true of 'saint Fred'. Each of us will have our equivalent 'saints' for whom we can give thanks to God this day.

A colleague in ministry always begins a pastoral letter to a congregation with the phrase "Dear Saints". Each time I see it, it's a reminder to me that saints are not only historical figures or those we know who have died. Christians, as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1:2 are all "called to be saints", to become more Christlike each and every day. As we remember this day those who have gone before, let us commit to living out our calling as saints and encourage one another, to the glory of God.

Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

In royal robes, we don't deserve, each one of us is called to serve the one to serve – Jesus Christ himself. We sing about that now as we sing King of Kings, majesty or Jesus the name high over all.

StF 331 King of Kings, majesty or H and P 264 Jesus, the name high over all

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGnpfYqwO8k>

1

King of kings, majesty,
God of heaven living in me.
Gentle Saviour, closest Friend,
Strong Deliverer, Beginning and End,
all within me falls at your throne.
Your majesty, I can but bow;
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve,
I live to serve your majesty.

2

Earth and heaven worship you,
Love eternal, faithful and true,
who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
brought this sinner near to your throne;
all within me cries out in praise.
Your majesty, I can but bow;
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve,
I live to serve your majesty,
I live to serve your majesty.

Jarrod Cooper

Reading Matthew 5:1-12

Sermon

On the wall of our lounge is a picture. It is a picture of a mountain – a mountain that is very special to Graham and me. It is a picture of Mount Kilimanjaro. I've only ever climbed two official 'mountains' – Table Mountain in South Africa, which takes about 4-5 hours to ascend and 'Kili', which took 6 days to climb and a further two days to come down. Graham and I climbed it three years ago and, as a result, I have no intention of following the instructions in "The Sound of Music" to 'Climb every mountain' – my feet have only just recovered!

Mountains feature in our Gospel reading today and I say 'mountains' rather than mountain deliberately. The reading opens with these words: "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them". For sure only one mountain is directly mentioned (scholars think the location is in the hills to the North West of Galilee). But in the background if we use our imagination we are drawn to another mountain at another time, thousands of years before when a man ascended a mountain, came down it and began to teach what he had heard from the Lord. That man of course was Moses, ascending and descending Mount Sinai, and sharing with the Israelites all the laws God had given him to share. Moses shared with the people all that they must do to be obedient to God.

What Jesus shares from the top of another mountain though, is slightly different. Let's set it in context. Prior to our passage, Jesus has been sharing that 'the kingdom of heaven' is near; he has been calling people to repentance; he has called his first disciples and shared with them that rather than fishing for fish, he will teach them to fish for people. Jesus is doing a new thing – it will be transforming and transformative – and in this first part of a large block of teaching that we know as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus doesn't simply say to his disciples what they must *do* to be part of ushering in this transformation. No, instead he sets out a vision of how the world will *be* – and not what they must *do*, but who they must *be* to bring that about. The result is what we now know as The Beatitudes – attitudes of being- that are as relevant to us as disciples of Jesus today as they were to those first disciples on the mountain with Jesus.

Dependent on which Bible translation you use to read this passage, you will variously find the word blessed, happy or honoured at the start of each verse. In the Greek it is *makarios* – a word which is not fully explained by any of the English equivalents I've just given - but blessed is the closest. The qualities set out in the Beatitudes are to be emulated and celebrated:

Blessed are the *poor in spirit* – those who know their dependence upon God, who are not arrogant or selfish, whose identity is in God

Blessed are *those who mourn* – who lament the world situation, who long, as we say in the Lord's Prayer for God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done

Blessed are the *meek*: those who approach each situation with gentleness and renounce violence

Blessed are those *who hunger and thirst for righteousness*: who actively do God's will

Blessed are the *merciful* – meaning not just a fanciful notion of mercy but those who take direct action which is merciful

Blessed are the *pure in heart*- whose heart is set only on God

Blessed are the *peacemakers* – those who take positive action for reconciliation

Blessed are those *who are persecuted because of righteousness* -those committed to doing what is right – doing God's will.

Through these attitudes of being, so transformation will be brought about says Jesus – these attitudes/qualities are to be celebrated and affirmed. And Jesus doesn't say, blessed *will be* those who show these attitudes but blessed *are*...Jesus reminds us that these are present within the Christian community today. For sure, not every member of every congregation can claim to have all these attitudes, we are all, by God's grace 'work in progress' – but on this All Saints Day where we have been thinking about those who have inspired and inspire us now in our Christian faith, we will certainly find among them, those who bring reconciliation, those who show mercy, those who recognise their own need of God. And through their inspiration and witness we are encouraged to keep journeying, to root and ground ourselves in God, to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and be transformed by the Holy Spirit more and more into Christlikeness.

And we need that encouragement. For the attitudes of being that Jesus speaks about are attitudes that Jesus tells us are to be emulated, but that the prevailing culture does not value. And we need to guard against what could be 21st century beatitudes that deride meekness and gentleness, that 'jolly along' those who lament, that live only for today, that trample on the poor and the marginalised, that talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

For the second part of each of the Beatitudes reminds us that, not until that day, where every tear is wiped away, where every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord – will mercy, peace and righteousness finally prevail. To follow Jesus is not about attaining success or status or even being shielded from suffering – Blessed are YOU, Jesus says to the disciples directly – when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you. To live with these attitudes of being now, can be an uphill struggle – or even a mountainous one – but God is with us.

As we thank God for the 'saints' who have travelled ahead of us may our eyes be continually opened to seeing the world through God's eyes, to seeing others through God's eyes and, as we live in this revolutionary way, as imperfect saints but as those redeemed by love, may we be part of God's kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven and God's will being done. Salvation belongs to our God. AMEN.

We continue to reflect on how we are to become more and more like Jesus as we sing together "May the mind of Christ my Saviour"

Hymn StF 504/H and P 739 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ghgaqT57lk&t=74s>

1

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

2

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

3

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

4

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self forgetting —
this is victory.

5

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

Katie Barclay Wilkinson
(1859–1928)

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Lord of love, we thank you for your love for us. Thank you for your call upon our lives as part of the body of Christ – as saints – this day. May we keep our eyes fixed on you Lord, and by your Holy Spirit, be equipped for all that you call us to do and be as we live out our calling.

Lord, you have called us to be your people at this time in history, in this generation, in this part of your world. We pray Lord for your world, thinking especially this day of all those who have leadership responsibilities at international, national, and local levels, those who work to combat oppression, those whose roles involve peace making and reconciliation. Help us Lord to be channels of your peace where you have placed us.

We pray Lord, for your church throughout the world. As your body, help us to stand up for the needs of those whose voices are crushed or silenced, to take positive action where we see injustice at work, to provide space where all are heard and welcomed, to shine as light in a world that can seem very dark at times.

Lord, there are many on our hearts who we want to lift before you in prayer this day. We bring to you those we know who are unwell, those who are under stress due to employment or lack of it, those whose relationships are at breaking point, those who are grieving. We bring them before your Lord, knowing that you know their needs and trusting them to you.

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves. We thank you for each one of the saints who has formed part of our journey and pray that as we journey on, we will be strengthened to live lives that bring you glory, show your love and point others to you. AMEN.

We are called, not to keep the Good News of Jesus to ourselves, but to bring hope. We sing about that as we sing our closing hymn.

StF 407 Hear the call of the kingdom/H and P 804 The Church of Christ in every age

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDfuGb89x_8

1

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to
proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.*

2

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

3

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come;
let the nations put their trust in him.
King of heaven, we will answer the call ...

Keith Getty (b. 1974), Kristyn Getty (b. 1980)
and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Benediction

“I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3: 18-19 (NRSV)).

As our worship draws to a close, we share the Grace together. If you are reading this service by yourself, say this to others, knowing that they will be sharing it with you.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.