

HAEBEA Home Worship – All Saints & All Souls

1st November 2020 – Revd Cecil White

Call to worship - 1 John 3: 2-3

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed.

What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him,

for we will see him as he is.

And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Let us pray

God of unfailing light,
in your realm of glory
the poor are blessed,
the hungry filled,
and every tear is wiped away.
Strengthened by this vision,
may we follow in the way of holiness
that your Son made known in life and death. Amen.



Introductory comment

Welcome to worship today on the feast of All Saints and the eve of All Souls. One commentator writes: 'All Saints' Day is a wonderful time in the life of a congregation to attend to the dimensions of the faith often neglected or relegated to funeral meditations.' There is truth in this comment, for we tend to manage our affairs in a somewhat clinical way, ticking the job as being 'done', then getting on with other matters. But the festival of All Saints (today) and All Souls (tomorrow) helps us to put the brake on life to consider with sober reflection what it is that we should be giving thanks for when we recall the faithful departed. The scripture verses at the top of the page remind us that our goal is to see God and to be received by God – ultimately in heaven. There are of course a lot of saints/souls who have gone before us in the faith and so it is appropriate that we stop to remember them with thanksgiving in the hope that we will follow them to be with God for eternity.

We recall the words of William Walsham How's hymn, written in 1864 and based on Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1 which says: 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...'

For all the saints,
who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesus,
be forever blessed.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou wast their Rock,
their Fortress and their might;
Thou, Lord, their Captain
in the well fought fight;
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true Light.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blessed.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
The King of glory passes on His way.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

And when the strife is fierce,
the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave, again,
and arms are strong.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds,
from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl
streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Reflection

Today's gospel reading reminds us about the centrality of Jesus's teaching of the Kingdom – which is a reality within us. These are familiar words that strike like the heartbeat of our practice as believers. We are indeed blessed when we experience or display such things as purity of heart, or become advocates for peace, or show mercy, or even mourn.

But there is a sobering reminder towards the end of the reading for all believers who may have, or might be, persecuted and defamed for their faith. This has been the lot of many of the 'glorious company of martyrs', but so too has it been for the anonymous witnesses – even some saintly characters whom we have personally known. It seems that for some their reward comes at a price, for Jesus says: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

So, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day reminds us of the great heritage of faith that was borne by the faithful who have witnessed to Christ and who have gone before us to their eternal rest. We recall their names today with thanksgiving.

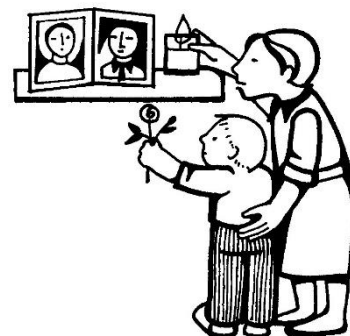
Who do you remember today: a teacher; a preacher; a saintly person who pointed you to Christ; a believer who bore illness bravely; a husband; a wife; a child; a friend? Who do you name before God today?

Let us pray

God of life,
we praise you for your abiding presence
from generation to generation,
blessing your people,
strengthening us for lives of service,
empowering us to witness.

Today we remember the church's faithful departed
and in particular we name before you with thanksgiving...
(name those who are now in heaven)

Grant that as we serve you now on earth,
so we may one day rejoice with all the saints
in your kingdom of light and peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



*Let them share the joys and
blessings of the life to come*

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father...

A Blessing

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen us that we may transform the world;
and the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon us and those we love, now and always. Amen.