

All The Saints

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

November 2020 (1 - 28 November)



To the Saints of Sanctuary First,

On *All Saints Day* we remember all the saints. All the saints that have been, all the saints there are,

and all the saints that are to come.

We are a heavenly collective. We are all connected and we all matter. None of us are insignificant. We belong to God, and through God we belong to one another.

The world has been reminded in 2020 of how much we need each another.

You are needed. I am needed. We all have a part to play. We saints, on a mission from God. To live lives committed to those who need us and connected to the realities of heaven — of goodness and kindness and hope.

Instead of despairing — we lament.

Instead of switching off — we switch on.

Instead of trying to be heroes — we humble ourselves as saints.

To all the saints — thank you. You are valued. You matter. We can't do this without you.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following discussion questions are designed to accompany the adapt the monthly theme material (see the [All The Saints Resource Pack](#)) for small group work. They are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme.

These questions are just a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests your group.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: To all the saints...

To be part of the Body of Christ — to be part of God’s church — is to be a member of a community that spans throughout history, to this very moment and on to the future. Towards the end of the traditional Church Calendar (which begins again each Advent) many Christians take the opportunity to remember all the saints who have gone on before us. Sometimes we remember particular celebrated lives but also the wonderful myriad lives of ordinary, valiant Christians throughout history who have maintained the faith and learned and loved together. We are part of a vibrant ongoing communion of saints — only a fraction of whom walk the earth this moment.

Read Micah 3: 5-12

We are heading into a time of flux. As strange and unnerving as 2020 has been 2021 will likely show us the implication of this pandemic for the next decade. As we move from crisis mode to adjusting to the new normality many voices will jostle for attention offering visions in the vacuum. We would do well to remember that our long history of saints has featured false prophets motivated by financial gain and not our wellbeing.

Who are the false prophets in our society claiming to see a path to a glorious future when they are in fact motivated by their own greed?

And as saints, drawing on the strength of our ancestors in faith, how can we challenge these false prophets?

Read Psalm 43

Timeless words of raw emotion that echo down through the ages. The people we meet in the Bible are not one dimensional heroes going through the motions. This psalm gives us a glimpse of very real human vulnerability, even desperation, but also hope.

In verse 2 the psalmist is unafraid to, as we would say in Scotland ‘gie God into trouble’ for abandoning him. God is big enough and compassionate enough to take our anger and our fear, and the anger and the fear of all the saints through the years who have loved and lived and hoped.

Are we this honest and direct with God when we pray?

Read 1 John 3: 1-3

The Communion of Saints stretches into eternity beyond time! This passage gives us a glimpse of our ongoing journey of understanding God. In verse 2 there is a poetic open-ended phrase: “What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.” (NRSV) It’s mind blowing. What do you reckon it means?

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Part 2: All souls together

We remember those we have lost as many families and communities have had to bear an increased burden of grief this year. We remember all the medical staff and other frontline workers who have bravely worked on our behalf. We trust to God's care those who have left this life and gone on to glory. God will care for them now and the Spirit will draw near us.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

How can we support the grieving and the suffering? How can we work to hear their wisdom, their hurt, their longings? As we seek to rebuild society in the wake of 2020 how can we be mindful of those who will still need time to heal?

Read Psalm 78: 1-7

How have we been doing tending the fire of our faith, sheltering the sparks and fanning them into flame, for the next generation? What more can we do?

Read Romans 15: 1-13

We belong to a God of hope and we have a mandate to help build others up

What does it mean to live a life overflowing with hope? And how can we help others at this difficult time to feel hope?

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Part 3: Unprecedented people

As the fraction of saints that are currently alive right now on earth — descendants of the saints that have gone before us and ancestors of those to come — are we stepping up to the moment? Unprecedented times call for unprecedented people... there has never been a time like this and there have never been a collection of people like this with our combined skills and talents. What are we capable of...?

Read James 1: 19-27

You can imagine James writing today: *For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in 'selfie mode'; for they look at themselves and, on putting their phone down immediately forget what they look like...*

In this time of pandemic many of us are getting more used to seeing ourselves when we communicate with others as video calls tend to show us a mini version of ourselves on screen. How do you find it? Have you learned anything new about yourself from watching yourself speak?

More generally 2020 has given us more time at stuck at home, more time to ponder with a figurative mirror held up to our lives as a lot of normal life is suspended — we have perhaps sometimes been more able to see what we are like and what our priorities are without all the coming and going. What have you learnt about yourself over the past six or so months? How about God — have you learned to see God in a new way?

As we anticipate 2021 will we remember what we have discovered over this time of 'reflection'?

Read Matthew 25: 14-30

For many of us, maybe most of us, the temptation when we find ourselves in a hole... is to keep digging. We have gone this far now — we might as well keep going and hope something will work out. The slave who planted one talent figured he was doing the right thing: maintaining the status quo. He wasn't sure what to do. He was in a hole. He started digging.

When have we as Christian communities been guilty of finding ourselves in a hole... and deciding to just keep digging? When have we thought it was better not to change course but instead just double down?

How can we rediscover the value of what we have?

Read Acts 1: 12-14

We, like the early church, are living through a time of upheaval on the cusp of something new. Like them we are fragmented, weary and unsure what the future holds. And like them we need to pray continuously. What are our open and expectant prayers for the uncertain future we face?

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Part 4: Seeking the lost, binding the injured

Read Ezekiel 34: 11-24

We are all shepherds somewhere in our lives — helping to lead and care for others — family, colleagues and neighbours. And as we do we follow in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd. As apprentice shepherds we do what we can to seek the lost, bring back the strayed, bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. God alone can judge but we can all help tend one another.

In what ways — big and small — can we contribute to the divine work of seeking, bringing, binding and strengthening?

Read Psalm 100

God is faithful to every generation... but every generation has to rediscover God for themselves. How can we help? And how can we get out of the way and let people find God on their own terms?

Read Ephesians 3: 7-21

What a beautiful prayer for all us saints — all the Lord's holy people — struggling and surviving and thriving with one another.

What does it mean in your life, in your home, in your local community to be 'filled with all the fullness of God'? What does that even look like? And how does that sense of *fullness* affect how you live your everyday life?