

All The Saints

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.

Each week of the theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.

To all the saints... (1 November)

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 at Advent) many Christians take the opportunity to remember all the saints who have gone on before us. Sometimes we remember particular martyrs and celebrated lives but also the wonderful myriad lives of ordinary, valiant Christians throughout history who have maintained the faith and learned and loved. We are part of a vibrant ongoing communion of saints — only a fraction of whom walk the earth this moment.

1. Psalm 107: 1-7, 33-37

2. Micah 3: 5-12

3. Psalm 43

4. 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13

5. Matthew 23: 1-12

6. Revelation 7: 9-17

7. 1 John 3: 1-3

1. **The redeemed of the Lord!** A vision of ecological harmony where those forced to roam can find rest and peace and good living in the earth. Many of God's saints in the past, and now, have found themselves forced to wander, unable to find roots. We remember those who have suffered on the road and we pray that those who fall victim to inhospitable climates and political regimes can find rest and peace.
2. **Being wary of false prophets.** We are heading into a time of flux. As strange 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.
3. **A disquiet soul.** Timeless words that have resonated with the saints through the ages. The call to hope is as true and as difficult as it always has been.
4. **God's words.** We as saints of the Body of Christ have the power — through the blessing of the Holy Spirit — to transmit God's words to one another. We are only human and none of us have all the answers but if we remain humble and focused on God we can be a means of others' hearing the life changing words of our heavenly Father.
5. **Their phylacteries are broad and their fringes long!** Jesus here is calling out the hypocrisy of those who try to make the outwards signs of their faith as ostentatious as possible while neglecting their own personal conduct. Think of your fellow saints — are we ever guilty (like the Pharisees here) of 'showing off our faith' to make others feel bad?
6. **All tribes. All people. All languages.** There are no cultural, geographical, or linguistic barriers to the Communion of Saints. Saints are multi-voiced and no community has a monopoly on God's love.
7. **What we will be has not yet been revealed...** Wow! The Communion of Saints stretches to the past and on into eternity. There is more to come!

All souls together (8 November)

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. It is also Remembrance Sunday and we remember all those who had to sacrifice so much for others.

Let us remember the grieving as we seek to rebuild society in the wake of 2020. And in this newly built society we must work to have better priorities and seek ever more justice that recognises the dignity of all souls.

1. 1

Thessalonians

4: 13-18

1. **Remembering those who grieve.** Let us hear their wisdom, their hurt, their longings. Let's come together and learn from one another as we grieve with hope. As a network of souls connected beyond time and space we remember the sacrifices made by those who have gone on before us.

2. Joshua 24:

1-3a, 14-25

2. **'You gotta serve somebody'** As we cross the river from our lives before COVID-19 to the new world we build after — what are we leaving behind? And what are we prioritising? Are there false gods, and false hopes we are going to let go of in the process of building back a better world? As Bob Dylan sang, 'You gotta serve somebody.'

3. Psalm 78:

1-7

3. **Are we keeping the fire alive?** Are we? Are we really? How have we been doing tending the fire, sheltering the sparks and fanning them into flame for the next generation?

4. Amos 5:

18-24

4. **An ever-flowing stream.** Justice may be blocked, dammed or diverted but it can't be held back forever.

5. **Help.** One of the most ancient prayers of the human soul phrased and rephrased by saints over the years: 'Help.'

5. Psalm 70

6. **Hope.** We belong to a God of hope.

6. Romans 15:

1-13

7. **With us, by us, for us.** In all and through all — when everything collapses, when it feels like the sky is falling in — God is with us, and by us, and for us.

7. Psalm 46

Unprecedented people (15 November)

As the fraction of saints that are currently alive right now on earth — descendants of the saints that have gone before us and ancestors to 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?

1. Proverbs 27: 17

1. **As iron sharpens iron...** Are we sharpening one another?

2. Psalm 123

2. **Have mercy.** Like every generation we come together to pray the ancient prayer: 'Have mercy'.

3. James 1: 19-27

3. **Forgetting what we look like.** The mirror analogy is telling. If we talk the talk but don't walk the walk we can become alienated from ourselves, forgetting what we truly look like as created beings made in the image of our creator.

4. James 2: 14-26

4. **Not just 'keeping the faith' but 'keeping the faith alive'.** Our faith is nurtured and nourished through how we tend and care for one another.

5. 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

5. **Stay awake.** Are we sleepwalking — going through the motions without being present — or are we awake and alert?

6. Matthew 25:14-30

6. **Digging a hole.** 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.

7. Acts 1: 12-14

7. **Praying constantly.** 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 openly and expectantly.

Seeking the lost, binding the injured (22 November)

Saints together. Following God. Seeking the lost. Binding the injured. Loving one another.

1. Ezekiel 34: 11-24
 2. Psalm 100
 3. Ephesians 1: 1-14
 4. Ephesians 1: 15-23
 5. Ephesians 2: 11-22
 6. Ephesians 3: 7-21
 7. Ephesians 4: 1-16
1. **However we shepherd this is our mandate.** Whenever we have responsibilities to care and lead others — family, colleagues, neighbours — 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.
 2. **God is faithful to every generation...** but every generation has to rediscover God for themselves. How can we help? How can we get out of the way and let people find God on their own terms?
 3. **Christ — the hinge point of history.** Across all of time and space — from the very beginning and through everything — we saints in Ephesus or Stirling or anywhere on earth — are connected through Jesus Christ.
 4. **Your love towards all the saints.** Open the eyes of our heart gracious God to see one another as you do.
 5. **We live in God and God lives in us.** We saints are not strangers or foreigners we are fellow citizens and even housemates — in a dwelling founded by God.
 6. **Rooted and established in love.** What a prayer for all us saints — all the Lord's holy people — struggling and thriving and surviving with one another.
 7. **Growing and building — ligaments of love.** As ligaments hold a body together so it is love that holds us saints together in the Body of Christ. A love that keeps growing and deepening.