

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
All Saints Sunday - November 5, 2023

Call to Worship 1 John 3:1-3

What marvelous love the Father has extended to us!

Just look at it—we're called children of God!

That's who we really are.

But that's also why the world doesn't recognize us or take us seriously,
because it has no idea who he is or what he's up to.

But friends, that's exactly who we are: children of God.

And that's only the beginning. Who knows how we'll end up!

**What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—
and in seeing him, become like him.**

All of us who look forward to his Coming stay ready,
with the glistening purity of Jesus' life as a model for our own.

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Hymn

We cannot own the sunlit sky

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1. We cannot own the sunlit sky,
the moon, the wild-flowers growing,
for we are part of all that is
within life's river flowing.
With open hands receive and share
the gifts of God's creation,
that all may have abundant life
in every earthly nation.
2. When bodies shiver in the night,
and, weary, wait for morning,
when children have no bread but tears,
and war horns sound their warning,
God calls humanity to wake,
to join in common labour,
that all may have abundant life
in oneness with their neighbour.
3. God calls humanity to join
as partners in creating a future
free from want or fear,
life's goodness celebrating.
That new world beckons from afar,
invites our shared endeavour,
that all may have abundant life
and peace endure forever.

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of life and blessing,

You have created all that exists. In Christ, you offer your redeeming love to every soul in every situation. So it is our greatest joy to be united in the community of your people, stretching across the generations, throughout all time and space. We join our thanks and praise to the voices of all your saints, in heaven and on earth,

who worship and adore you, saying:

**All blessing and honour, glory and power
wisdom, riches and strength belong to you, O God,
now and forever!**

**God of courage and commitment,
we confess we have not always followed the path you set before us.
Fear holds us back from fully embracing your gift of new life.
Our anxieties prevent us from bearing witness to your love.
Forgive us, O God. Give us courage that we may act as your saints in our own
time, faithfully following Jesus, no matter the cost.**

God of ages past, present and yet to come, your Word comes to us as the witness of your saints over many generations. Send the Holy Spirit to open our hearts so that we too may hear your wisdom and come to know Christ more deeply as your Living Word.
Amen. The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. All Saints Sunday. November 5, 2023. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Beloved, through the love shown to us by Jesus, we can be sure that we are God's children now. The Spirit of Christ is among us in this gathering and the nature of Christ is revealed within us. We are becoming more and more like Christ each day. Therefore, let us live joyfully as God's people; saints and instruments of God's way.

~ from "All Saints Day (Year A)," posted on **Seasons Online**. http://www.seasonsonline.ca/files/all-saints-day_cong-life_vr-a.pdf

Scripture Readings

❖ Revelation 7:9-17

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated
on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

¹¹ And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹² singing,

‘Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honour and power and might
be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.’

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?’ ¹⁴ I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great

ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- ¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God,
and worship him day and night within his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
- ¹⁶ They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;
- ¹⁷ for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

❖ **Matthew 5:1-12**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

- ³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- ⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- ⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- ⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
- ⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- ⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- ¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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Message Blessing, Glory, Wisdom and Thanksgiving

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen. (Rev 7:12).

These are words that we just heard in John's vision that is the book of Revelation. Now I have not preached on Revelation often. That is because it is literature that takes a little delving into. John's vision does not feel all that uplifting and with ancient stories and modern apocalyptic literature and movies bringing in all kinds of messages and fears, it feels like it takes even more to unpack a book such as Revelation.

Many of us have watched movies where it is the end of the world and people are left behind while loved ones are obliterated or missing. I will be honest in saying that I am not one who cares for that genre, well that and horror movies. I have a rather vivid imagination, coupled with a strong emotional response, so I find my life is calmer when I don't consider those possibilities. Thankfully for writers and tv and movie producers

there are many others who will pay money to be frightened or filled with suspense. I have enough dealing with what is before me right now, the people and situations, without thinking too much about the future.

And yet, even the Bible delves into these kinds of stories and Revelation is a prime example. If you haven't read Revelation then you might not realize that it is filled with powerful imagery of destruction and ruin. But there are also passages that talk about streets of gold, a New Jerusalem, beauty, hope, possibility and promise. The promise that at some point, with all that we experience and will yet experience, God will wipe every tear from our eye.

Now I said I had a vivid imagination, and when I picture this, I see the hand of God gently touch my face and, in that moment, take all of my fear, pain, sorrow, and anxiety away. Then I look beyond myself and see God doing that very same act for everyone around me. This is my vision of God. The God of love who calls each and every one of us saints. God's beloved. God's children. Think of the person who has shown love toward you and know that their love for you does not even begin to show the depth of God's love for you.

The scripture passage from Matthew is what has been dubbed The Beatitudes. Each line a promise of a future that will be for those who are hurting, struggling, and challenged by what life has brought them.

⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

And one that really hits home for us in a world that is experiencing so much unrest...

⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Often, we think of being blessed, as Professor at Luther Seminary Rolf Jacobson would say, a benefit conferred upon some one. Still, it could have been more accurately translated into English as honourable. Honourable are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Honourable are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Honourable are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

It is hard to feel blessed when things are going sideways. In fact, people only referred to being blessed when things are going well or they are in a good state of mind. But honourable...this is where Jesus situates himself with people. Jesus – God, is with those who are suffering. God understands suffering the suffering of humanity. Jesus experienced this suffering in his earthly life under the hands of authorities to the point of death. Jesus in life spent his time with those who were hungry, sick, in need of hope and health. That is not to say that Jesus is only present for those who suffer the most. We

can all take heart in that in any and all suffering Jesus knows our pain, our anguish, our brokenness, and is present with us.

Jesus is also with us in our joy. It is the good shepherd who goes off to find that one lost sheep and comes back rejoicing. Or is like the woman who lost her coin and upon finding it rejoices. In other words, Jesus is present to us in all that we experience. And that is the promise of both the Beatitudes and the reading from Revelation. God is with us. Jesus is with us.

So these readings are about God with us now in our present and God with us in our future whether that be in our living or in our dying.

On this All Saints Day, when we celebrate those who have lived and we have loved, may I remind you that in the New Testament saints are not those who have been lifted up as having been over the top dedicated, amazing people of God. Saints in the New Testament are those who love Jesus and do their best to live their lives in the Spirit of Jesus. Those who love God and trust in the Holy Spirit to guide them. Those who, knowing they don't measure up, keep working toward becoming more the people of God they are called to be. Not because they have to, but because love and grace draws them in and our response is to pick ourselves up every time we fall short and try again.

I am going to read from Revelation 7 again. May you hear the hope that is in the scripture at a time when our world is feeling pulled apart. When people seem further from caring about each other and creation than it has felt for some time. May we witness God's promises in our lives.

Revelation 7, the vision of John, the lamb is Jesus...

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'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹²singing,

'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' ¹⁴I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

- ¹⁶ They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
- ¹⁷ for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

Invitation to the offering

The gifts of God have touched us through the work of many hands and the commitment of many lives over many centuries. We give our gifts to honour God and all God's saints, praying that we too may be a blessing to those who come after us.

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Should you wish to support this ministry and/or would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Prayers of the People

God of all people, all places and all situations,
we come seeking your strength and your direction,
to know the comfort of your presence and the energy of your Spirit.
You have called us to work towards reconciliation in the world.
Help us to live out the ways of your kingdom in your Church and in our lives.
God, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

Jesus, you said, "Blessed are the poor".
We pray for those who live on the margins of our community,
facing the challenges of low income and the insecurity it brings.
Make us generous stewards of the abundance we enjoy
so that there will be enough for all.

Jesus, you said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst".
We pray for people and communities facing famine and drought.
Give strength to people and agencies dedicated to alleviating misery.
Move us to share what we have with those who go hungry.

Christ, you blessed the peacemakers.
We pray for those who work for peace and reconciliation in a divided world.
Protect those who face violence, persecution, and chaos day by day,
and bring an end to hostilities. Move us to serve as mediators and models of
forgiveness in our relationships.

Jesus, you blessed those who weep.
We pray for those who are dying, and those who mourn their loved ones.
We name in silence those on our hearts this day,

including those saints who have blessed us in days and years gone by:
Keep us united in love with all who rest from life in this world but live with you.
Jesus, with your followers in every generation, we pray the words you taught us:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Hymn

Take my life and let it be

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1. Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days:
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee.
3. Take my voice and let me sing
always, only for my King;
take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee.
4. Take my silver and gold:
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.
5. Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart: it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.
6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

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Blessing

God's people have celebrated all that God has done,
from creation, to the cross,
and with the saints who have lived among us we say...

Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honour
and power and might
be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

~ from *Celebrating All Saints Day: Resources for Congregational Ministry and Worship*, Rev. Richard J. Hull II,
Contributing Author. Published online by Christian Church
Foundation. <http://www.christianchurchfoundation.org/userfiles/files/allsaintsdayworshipresource2012.pdf>