

All Saints Sunday
November 7, 2021

Collect of the day:

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

First Lesson: Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

1 But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.

2 In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster,

3 and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

4 For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.

5 Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;

6 like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt-offering he accepted them.

7 In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble.

8 They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.

9 Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

Psalm 24

- 1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
- 2 for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.
- 3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
- 5 They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
- 6 Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
- 8 Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory.

A Reading from the Book of Revelation 21:1-6a

11 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; 4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." 5 And the one who was seated on

the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

Gospel: John 11:32-44

32 When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34 He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus began to weep. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" 38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The Traffic!

On the way home from church last week we ran into all kinds of traffic. These folks were going to be at a standstill for a very long time. We looked at each other and said; "Salem! It's Halloween". We managed to skirt the worst of it and got home ok, a good 20-30 minutes late. "Should have known!" We said to each other.

Then that night, for the first time ever we had scores and scores of kids come by the door. All of a sudden there are lots and lots of children in the neighborhood. They were adorable as children as that age are, the teens a little less so who came by later on. But it was all good fun nonetheless.

For a good many in this world it is called "The Day of the Dead" and is observed in rather ghoulish mostly harmless ways.

But this I can say for us at least, this is not the "Day of the Dead" as much as it is the "Day of the Holy". After all the name of the Day is All Hallows Eve or Halloween. All Saints Day is not only a celebration of those who have made a name for themselves among the exemplary in the nearer presence of God. It is also a day for all the rest of us who have lived quietly and faithfully. Those we love are quite ordinary folk like us but no less holy especially in the eyes of God.

All Saints Day and the Sunday following are set aside each year to remember that not all of us have achieved great things, but that we are all holy. From the time of our Baptism and Confirmation, our first Communion, our Marriage and then in turn, the Baptism and Confirmation of our children and then eventually to the time of our sickness and death itself, the church marks every moment of life as holy! Every moment joyful or sad and everything in between is a celebration of the sacred in life.

We do not know if Lazarus was especially saintly, in the modern sense of the word. But we do know he was deeply loved and not just by Mary

and Martha. Jesus loved him too. Jesus was deeply moved in Spirit. To emphasize the fact the Gospel says so twice. And then in the shortest sentence of the Greek Scripture we hear the words “Jesus wept”. The love we have for one another and of course the love that God bears toward us all makes us holy.

The word “saint” comes from the French “saint” and means “holy”. The Title of the Scripture in French is La Saint Bible, the Holy Bible. The title Saint has a significantly different meaning because the Church recognizes some on the the calendar as especially holy. In the Episcopal Church Calendar we have what we call Red Letter Days and Black Letter Days. The Red Letter Days are for those whose name is specifically mentioned in the New Testament as disciples of Jesus. The Black Letter Days are for those the Church recognizes down through the years whose lives are of special note to us in salvation history.

Beyond that every Sunday is holy. When we add all these days together we begin to see the idea of the Sanctification of Time. Every moment of life is holy. And God is at the heart of it all. In every breath you take in the beating of your heart breaths and beats the breath and heart of God.

When we think of it, the idea of the holy is about “at all times and in all places”. Therefore with Angels and Archangels and all the company of heaven; ah! suddenly we are moved toward the Eucharist.

The First Lesson today teaches that “The Souls of the Righteous are in the hand of God and no torment shall ever touch them.” The collect for the day proclaims that “we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses”. They make us holy. John the Divine sees “a new heaven and a new earth” as God continues the work of the sanctification of time and space and we do too in concert with God.

When Scripture says that God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, it moves me deeply indeed. In fact it moves me to tears every time when I read them at the graveside of friends, family, and parishioners.

We are met day after day with the sacred. Every soul we meet is holy. So is each new day. Is it too much to ask in this time of highly charged political divisiveness that we are all holy and that the time we have is holy? It is hard to hate someone if we see them as holy. We are under the mandate of Jesus to love one another, and moreover to love our enemies.

Time passes quickly. We don't always realize how precious the time is and how precious our loved ones are while we have them. How often at weddings and funerals do we hear it said; "The family needs to get together more often and not just at times like this."

Sin darkens life and hides the holy from plain sight. And there are many sins that will do the trick as you know! It is as though so many are bound head to toe with bandages and set in a tomb of darkness. Isn't that what the story of Lazarus is all about at some level? Resurrection is not just about something that is supposed to happen at some very distant time after we are long dead. No! This is about a time in the midst of life. Mary and Martha and Jesus are very much alive and are deeply moved by some kind of death that this dear one died.

When Jesus heals the blind, and the lame or when he goes out of his way to reach out to the lost sheep or love the leper he speaks to us in far more than in literal words, but in figures of speech, metaphor and he appears to our imagination to waken us. Jesus suggests a way of life that will bring us fully alive in our own time.

There are times when so many seem deadened and bound head to toe in bandages and Jesus is deeply moved about such a death. Jesus weeps for the homeless and those who have yet to enter into recovery. Talk about lost sheep! Notice Jesus does not condemn them but releases them from the tomb.

"If only you had been here my brother would not have died!" Well, Jesus is here and so are we. None need die this way. Bad enough when we have to die after a good long life but to die this way?

Jesus weeps whenever we die and especially when we are lost and die the kinds of death that unnecessary to die.

Jesus says; “Take away the stone!” True there will be a stench. We all know the stench of sin and death. I’ve been around it all too many times. But I also know the joy of life and forgiveness; compassion and reconciliation. And I know of the Victory of Christ over both sin and death.

Which brings me back to the traffic. It is very heavy, For many we are stuck in it, overwhelmed by it. For many it is a mindless chasing after the vanity of money and power and addiction. But for those of us Baptized and who are dead to sin and death, we are now alive in Christ.

Thank God we know Jesus. If ever there were a time for Jesus to be in our midst and tell us to come out of the tomb and loose our bandages and bring us to life again, this would be it.

Resurrection is real. It is true. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

In the Name of God; the Most Holy, Undivided and Everlasting Trinity.
Amen.