

All Saints Day: The Hope That Holds Us

Readings: Revelation 7.9–17; Psalm 34.1–10, 22; 1 John 3.1–3; Matthew 5.1–12

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May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Today, on All Saints Day, we remember those who have gone before us in faith. We give thanks for the people who have shaped our lives: parents and grandparents, friends and neighbours, faithful members of this church, and those whose quiet acts of kindness may never have been recognised beyond their own communities.

In a rural community, we often understand the value of people who simply get on with things. They lend a hand when someone is struggling, turn up when there is work to be done, bring a meal in difficult times, and stand beside others through drought, flood, illness and grief. They may never think of themselves as saints. Yet their lives can show us something of God's love.

Our readings today remind us that sainthood is not about being perfect. It is about belonging to God and learning to live in the light of his grace.

In John's first letter, we hear these wonderful words: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are."

That is where our Christian life begins. Before we do anything for God, we are loved by God. We are his children, held in a relationship that does not depend on our achievements, our status or how well we think we have managed life.

And John tells us that we do not yet see the whole picture. We live with unanswered questions, disappointments and uncertainties, but we have a hope that one day we will see Christ as he is and be made like him.

The vision in Revelation gives us a glimpse of that hope. John sees a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before God's

throne. They have come through suffering, and God himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

What a promise that is. God does not overlook suffering or pretend that grief is unimportant. He promises a future in which sorrow and pain will not have the final word. The saints we remember today belong to that great multitude, and so do all who place their trust in Christ.

Then Jesus, in Matthew's Gospel, describes the people who are blessed: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful and the peacemakers.

These are not necessarily the people the world calls successful. Yet Jesus tells us that God's kingdom belongs to them. He sees the grieving, the gentle, the struggling and the faithful, even when others fail to notice them.

Psalms 34 invites us to "taste and see that the Lord is good." It is an invitation to trust God in the ordinary circumstances of life, not only when everything is going well, but also when the road is hard and the future uncertain.

On All Saints Day, we give thanks for those whose faith has encouraged us. We also remember that we are called to continue their witness. We are not asked to become famous or flawless, but to follow Jesus in the places where we live and serve.

So let us be people of mercy, people who comfort those who mourn, people who seek peace and do what is right. Let us encourage one another and hold fast to the hope that God's love is stronger than death.

For the saints are not simply people of the past. They are God's people, gathered in Christ across generations, and we are part of that same family.

May we live faithfully today, trusting that the God who has carried his people through every age will one day bring us home, where every tear will be wiped away and we will see him face to face. Amen.