



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2023 – THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

COLLECT

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

Psalm 34.1-10

- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times; ♦
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul shall glory in the Lord; ♦
let the humble hear and be glad.
- 3 O magnify the Lord with me; ♦
let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the Lord and he answered me ♦
and delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 Look upon him and be radiant ♦
and your faces shall not be ashamed.
- 6 This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me ♦
and saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him ♦
and delivers them.
- 8 O taste and see that the Lord is gracious; ♦
blessed is the one who trusts in him.
- 9 Fear the Lord, all you his holy ones, ♦
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 Lions may lack and suffer hunger, ♦
but those who seek the Lord
lack nothing that is good.

A reading from the first letter of John, chapter 3, verses 1-3

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (for Communion services only)

Alleluia! Alleluia!

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 5, verses 1-12.

Glory to you, O Lord

The Beatitudes

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

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

A Reflection from Hannah...

The topsy-turvy nature of flourishing in the life of God is spelled-out most radically (and most uncomfortably) in the beatitudes. They are amazing, comforting words, but they challenge our very nature as evolved animals fighting for space and resources. If we look to human anthropology as the ultimate explanation of behaviour, the pressures of the environment in which we evolved suggest that the way to get on is to grab what we can and keep what we can; a life that seeks status and money, at the expense of whatever gets in our way. The brutal business of 'survival of the fittest' is what we most often assume will bring the biggest benefits, and many are satisfied that this account of the human condition- *The Selfish Gene*- is dominant and is inevitable.

But we know what a world without compassion, mercy and peace can look like. We see the agony of those who mourn, who are poor in spirit and who hunger and thirst for righteousness. We see all of that on our news screens today- particularly when we look to the situation in Israel and Gaza. In a flawed and unjust world, the beatitudes show us another way. These practical words of Jesus which give us principles to live by encourage us to find another level on which to function. By blessing those ways that fly in the face of worldly concepts of power, and by promising comfort to all in distress, they call us to put love as central to all our doings. They challenge us to live by a different creed- one in which there is the potential for all to flourish and peace to reign.

This past week as various people have been criticised or sacked for articulating a longing for peace, that has got a bit confused in our national conversation. But as children of God (as our first reading so profoundly puts it) our heart is always to see the humanity in another and to look for paths of peace and reconciliation, wherever we find ourselves and whatever the situation.

And as we celebrate the feast of All Saints this Sunday, we are celebrating those who have gone before us, who were of course never perfect, but who put the beatitude principles at the core of their lives and lived in the love which first spoke them. For them we give thanks, and we pray that we too may embrace those same ways.