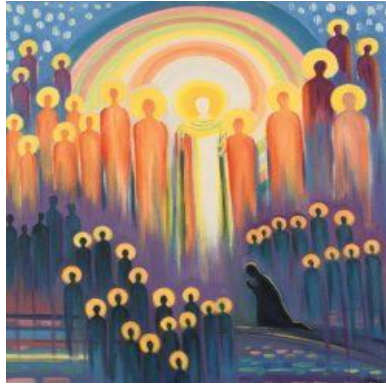


Sunday Morning Worship

Readings and Prayers 5th November 2023



Revelation 7.9-17

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. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

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

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' 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.

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.
They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat;
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.'

This is the word of the Lord.

1 John 3.1-3

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.

Matthew 5.1-12

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

Reflection (by Margaret Mandrell)

I wonder what your definition of a saint is? Someone with a flowing beard and robes, with his arm outstretched in a holy posture?

For me, it is my small, bustling grandmother who acted always out of love and compassion for others. She lived out her love of God and love of people who she served faithfully until her mid-80s. Her work was at the Mission for Poor Children in Birkenhead, which included Christmas day meals for hundreds, daily ministering to those who came looking for support, food or clothing; visiting the elderly, and making cakes for the lonely, elderly patients in the nearby hospital whose only visitor she was, each and every Sunday afternoon.

Desmond Tutu says that the Church of God has to be the salt and light of the world, the hope of the hopeless, through the power of God. As his followers, we are called to be compassionate and caring, a sharing community, forgiving others, as we have been forgiven. We are to be committed to reconciliation and peace makers.

One example of this is the life of Mother Teresa. She went to India aged 19 where she witnessed poverty, famine and death. She was called to work with the poor and dispossessed, living among them. By 1950 she was caring for "the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, lepers, all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden....and are shunned by everyone." She said "Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet especially your family. Be holy." She loved God with all her heart, soul and mind, being in unity with Christ and demonstrating His love.

We are called to be saints and to follow Jesus. Our reading today helps us to chose what is important. The Message by Eugene H. Peterson interprets the Bible in contemporary language and Jesus' words in this way,

"You're blessed when you are at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. You're blessed when you're content with just who you are-no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves the proud owners of everything that can't be bought.....You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being "care-full" you find yourselves cared for. You're blessed when you get your inside world-your mind and heart-put right. Then you can see God in the outside world."

He ends this passage by saying "And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble." We live in a culture dominated by the media, the cult of celebrity, where many aspire to be famous. Sometimes it seems that our message is not heard amongst the pressures of everyday life, but we are encouraged by the example of Jesus and his followers.

Today we celebrate the lives of an immense multitude of saints who have gone before us, many unknown and unsung, some very famous and familiar. In some cases, we have heard of their love and bravery, self-sacrifice and even martyrdom for the sake of the Gospel. The "communion of saints" is made up of all God's people, in heaven and on earth. Through Christ our prayers join with those who have lived and died and who influence us and guide us by their presence with us.

At this time of year we remember especially those who we have loved who have died. Our passage from Revelation is a wonderful encouragement, a reminder that we are part of a great multitude "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne"....who

"will hunger no more, and thirst no more.....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."

Teresa of Avila reminds us that "Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which he can do his work, yours are

the only feet with which he can go about the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Amen.

Prayers

United in the company of all the faithful
and looking for the coming of the kingdom,
let us offer our prayers to God,
the source of all life and holiness.

Merciful Lord,
strengthen all Christian people by your Holy Spirit,
that we may live as a royal priesthood and a holy nation
to the praise of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Bless John and Martin, our bishops and all ministers of your Church,
that by faithful proclamation of your word
we may be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets
into a holy temple in the Lord.

Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Empower us by the gift of your holy and life-giving Spirit,
that we may be transformed into the likeness of Christ
from glory to glory.

Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Give to the world and its peoples
the peace that comes from above,
that they may find Christ's way of freedom and life.
Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Hold in your embrace all who witness to your love in the
service of the poor and needy;
all who minister to the sick and dying;
and all who bring light to those in darkness.
From our own community we pray especially this morning for:
Anuwat Wanggane, Alan Coe, Sam and Andy Fellows, Jack Tubby,
Stacey Pearce, Michael Orton, Roger Jones, Patricia Ash, Jo Bunn,
Jason Thomson, Ryan Day, Bryan Plester, Brenda Hulland, David New,
and Adrina and Alan Price.
Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Touch and heal all those whose lives are scarred by sin
or disfigured by pain,
that, raised from death to life in Christ,
their sorrow may be turned to eternal joy.
Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Remember in your mercy all those gone before us

who have been well-pleasing to you from eternity;
And hear us as we remember with love and gratitude those whose
anniversary of death falls at this time:

Val Phillips, Ruth Cornock-Taylor, Joan Harper, Dot Roberts,
Rita Schofield, Libby Sheehan, Margaret Worthington.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Preserve in your faith your servants on earth,

guide us to your kingdom

and grant us your peace at all times.

Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

Hasten the day when many will come
from east and west, from north and south,
and sit at table in your kingdom.

Brief pause....

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

We give you thanks

for the whole company of your saints in glory,

with whom in fellowship we join our prayers and praises;

by your grace may we, like them, be made perfect in your love.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.