

Sunday Morning Worship
Readings & Reflection for 3rd November
All Saints Day

Isaiah 25.6-9

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death for ever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

This is the word of the Lord.

Revelation 21.1-6

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. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

'See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
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.'

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.' Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.'

This is the word of the Lord.

John 11.32-44

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.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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 for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone.

And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' 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.'

Reflection by Margaret Mandrell

We are God's people and are all called to be saints. Desmond Tutu said 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. We are called to be compassionate and caring, part of a sharing community. We are also called to be a forgiving community of those who have been forgiven. We should be committed to reconciliation, showing love and respect to those we meet. He said that "Goodness is stronger than evil, love is stronger than hate, light is stronger than darkness, life is stronger than death. Victory is ours through him who loves us."

Today we celebrate the lives of an immense multitude of those saints who have gone before. Many are unknown and unsung, whilst others are very familiar. We can recall instances of amazing love and bravery, self-sacrifice and in some cases, martyrdom, for the cause of God's kingdom. The "communion of saints" is made up of all believers, in heaven and on earth. Through Christ, our prayers join with the heavenly community of Christians, who pray and intercede for us. We can read stories of the journey of faith of the saints, to learn more of their lives, and their struggles, which help us to grow closer to God. We may be inspired by their holiness and the trials they overcame, by their lives of love and service, and their enduring faith. We see in them a reflection of God's love.

A Russian Orthodox peasant was sent to Greece and was in charge of the Mount Athos monastery workshops for many years. His workers were unsupervised, but motivated. When asked by other jealous monks as to how he achieved such good results, he explained that every day he prayed for each of his workers by name. He had compassion and love for them, and he "was drawn by the sense of the divine presence deeper and deeper". He met the divine love of Christ's compassion, holding each one, and was united with the love of God in prayer.

We have heard Jesus ask his friends "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" He said this to prepare Mary and Martha to receive back Lazarus from the grave. Jesus was calling to those who heard to trust in the faithfulness of God to accomplish this. Jesus in his obedience to and dependence upon the Father has the authority to give life. This reinforced the greatest "I am" statement of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and I am the life. He who believes in me will live".

Isaiah looked forward to a time of rejoicing when death will be swallowed up for ever, and the people will be exceedingly happy, knowing salvation from sin and abundant life. Our reading from Revelation echoes the hope expressed so long before by Isaiah, and speaks of a new heaven and a new earth. This passage is a great encouragement to those who have lost loved ones after a long period of suffering. The promise of no more death, no more mourning, crying and pain is powerful and the assurance that God will be present gives comfort. "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

We, as saints on earth, walk in the light of Christ, and experience everlasting life which starts when we believe. We need to hear and to be obedient, having resurrection in and through his death. Jesus returned to glory, and through faith, we as his followers can be part of this new life as sin is forgiven and we know joy and abundant life. We are called to serve others and draw them to God's love. For Desmond Tutu it was the respect and friendship of Trevor Huddleston which impacted so dramatically on that poor, dispossessed young man, living as a second class citizen in an oppressive regime. For the disciples, it was demonstrated after the death and resurrection of Jesus, as they learned to live in community. They courageously faced all the challenges of spreading the gospel, including arrest, torture and martyrdom.

Teresa of Avila wrote "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."