

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Mrs Helen Lunn. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

A warm welcome to each of you, on this All Saints Day. We offer God this time, our hearts and our lives, as we come together to worship him.

As we come together to give thanks for all the saints, our reading reminds us that we are all called to holiness, and to share with them in the bounty of God's kingdom.

Call to Worship

See what great love has been given to us,
that we should be called children of God.
Come, let us be in the presence of this sacred love.

Amen

Hymn Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! Singing the Faith 11

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gep0009l8mc>

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the sinful human eye thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Prayer

Let us pray

Jesus, remembered on the mountainside,
teaching the people near you as you looked beyond to a world

of need,
help us to hear your call today.
Turn us outwards, beyond ourselves,
Help us to see as clearly as you do the needs that we could meet.
Stir in us a hunger and thirst for justice to be done,
and a readiness to live simply that others may simply live.
Grant us courage to face the bitterness, resentment and misunderstanding
that can come with following you.
Inspire us to be heralds of your kingdom
and the instruments of your love,
for the sake of the God who accepts us and grants us life in its fullness.

With a great cloud of witnesses around us,
we try to run the race that lies ahead.
Help us, God of truth, to lay aside every weight
and the sin that restricts our movement.
Forgive us for the times we have failed to clothe ourselves in love
and enable us to fix our eyes on Jesus,
in whom we have found our hope.

We never worship you alone, Lord God.
Even when we are on our own, we are still surrounded by your faithful people from the past, in the present, and of the future.

Women and men have been prepared to die to serve you, Lord God.
Your love has had such an amazing effect on them.
Ordinary people, like us, have done extraordinary things, Lord God.
Your spirit has transformed them.
We have been given hope that there is a purpose for life, Lord God.
You have met us in Jesus.
So, with all your people of every age, we come to praise and adore you.

Amen

Bible Reading

Matthew 5:1-12 New International Version

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said:

“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 be shown 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 because of
righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and
falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice
and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the
same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Reflection

Today is All Saints Day and is often known as All Hallows, and
so this is why the day before became known as All Hallows’ Eve
or Hallow E’en. The celebration of All Saints Day on 1st
November dates from the ninth century although the saints
have been commemorated at other times of the year for much
longer than this.

The most ancient celebrations in the third century were in
remembrance of martyrs, those who had given their lives

because of their faith. As so many godly women and men have
provided an example of faith and inspiration to the Church, a
specific day was set. The day provides an opportunity to look
at the witness of both a few extraordinary Christians, and also
a lot of very ordinary ones who have followed Jesus in
extraordinary ways. They have blessed others through their
faith, and so have themselves been blessed, in ways that the
Beatitudes call to mind. I am sure that you can think of some
such people who have contributed to your Christian journey.

The triumph of the saints was recognised as the consequence
of overcoming the forces both of paganism and of evil and we
are reminded about this in Matthew 5 verses 11-12 where it
says “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of
me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in
heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets
who were before you.”

Maybe for our local communities Halloween has now
overshadowed All Saints as a feast day. Maybe as a church we
need to reclaim the celebration of Christians of old on All
Saints Day and inspire the present generation.

The first Beatitude in Matthew’s Gospel differs from Luke’s
version. Luke chapter 6 verse 20 has ‘Blessed are you who are
poor’, in contrast to Matthew who says ‘Blessed are the poor

in spirit.’ Spiritual poverty represents complete availability to Jesus, rather than simply a choice to be materially poor. It is for that total openness to Jesus Christ that we remember the saints, the holy ones of years past.

Many Christians in South America understand ‘poor in spirit’ to mean discipleship, and discipleship today as a challenge to adopt a poor lifestyle, in solidarity with those who are genuinely materially poor. As there are simply not enough resources in the world for all its inhabitants to have the lifestyle that the average British person have.

In Mexico, families make All Saints Day an occasion to remember not only the saints recognised by the Church, but also deceased infants and children, who are referred to as *angelitos* or little angels. In times of sorrow and remembrance, it is not unusual for people to discover or remind themselves of their need of God. As in Matthew 5 verse 4 we are reminded “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

The Beatitudes strongly emphasise righteousness, which means the task of conforming to God’s will. But the Greek word translated as righteousness also means justice. God’s will for the world is that justice should be done, and as Jesus’ followers are called to be righteous, they are also challenged to do justice.

Just imagine as you read Matthew 5 verses 6 and 10 and you replace righteousness with the word justice. It would sound like this ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be filled. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ This gives the passage a whole new meaning and is so needed at this time as so much injustice is going on in the world.

Righteousness and the practice of justice are required of Jesus’ disciples. As Matthew reminds us, we are blessed if we hunger and thirst for a just world, and will be blessed if we are persecuted as a result of working for it.

Matthew presents the Beatitudes as the beginning of Jesus’ preaching ministry, and closes it with the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. The concrete actions that the disciples undertake food for the hungry, drinks for the thirsty, clothing the naked and visiting the prisoners, give life to the materially poor, and herald the coming of God’s kingdom. The followers of Jesus reflect the grace that they have received in their actions for others, and especially for the poor.

In the Beatitudes Jesus reverses our expectations. The words echo the sense of Matthew 20:16 in the conclusion of the parable of the workers in the vineyard in which he says “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” Those who hold worldly power and authority are not those most likely to enter

the kingdom of heaven. Throughout all of the Beatitudes is a contrast between the way things seem now, and the reality that God is offering. To inherit the kingdom is to be dependent upon God. And we should listen out for that call of God's kingdom in whatever form it may take. We should seek to do justice as the disciples and saints before us loving and caring for those who are in need.

For all the saints who have gone before us.

We give you thanks.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Eternal and all-powerful God,
you hold out to your children the promise of life in your presence.

We praise you for all your saints who have been faithful to that vision, and who inspire us to seek your kingdom, now and in the world to come.

Pour out your blessing on all Christians who, in our own time, are called to follow your Son in the face of ridicule, opposition or persecution, particularly those suffering imprisonment or torture for the sake of the gospel.

Increase in us single-mindedness, humility and generosity of heart, so that through the work and witness of your Church all your people may come to share in the blessings you promise. As we remember your call to poverty of spirit and purity of heart, we ask you to bless us. Keep our hearts fixed on you amidst all the distractions and temptations of our world. Teach us to be joyful witnesses to your truth, and help us to become the people you call us to be.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Just and righteous God,
you call your children to bring peace to a troubled world. Pour out your blessing on communities and nations divided by inequality, intolerance, or fear, and upon those torn apart by war or civil conflict.

Uphold those who suffer economic or political oppression under unjust regimes.

Give wisdom to those individuals and organisations working to promote stability and integrity in government, or to secure the fair distribution of the world's resources.

As we remember your call to righteousness, we ask you to bless us. Deliver us from all self-seeking, and teach us to set

the demands of justice and peace above our own ambitions and desires.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful God,
in the lives of your saints you show us that from suffering comes life and healing.

Pour out your blessing on all in distress and pain.

Give courage and strength to those whose lives have been devastated by famine, violence or war.

Give hope to those in mental anguish, to the lonely and anxious, to those oppressed by the suffering of others, to those for whom life is without meaning or purpose, and to those in despair. And comfort those in physical pain.

As we remember those who suffer, we ask you to bless us. Give us the gift of true compassion, so that in showing mercy, we may receive mercy ourselves.

Lord hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Glorious God,
as your children now, we look with confidence to the time when we shall see you as you are.

Pour out your blessing on all who have died, and bring them to share in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Bountiful God,
we know that we have nothing to give you, and that we receive all things from you.

Pour out your blessing on those whose needs we bring you now in the silence of our hearts.

Joining our prayers with those of all the saints, known and unknown, we commend ourselves and one another to you, O Lord.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn Hear the Call of the Kingdom Singing the Faith 407

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

Hear the call of the kingdom,
lift your eyes to the King;
let his song rise within you
as a fragrant offering
of how God, rich in mercy,
came in Christ to redeem
all who trust in his unfailing grace.

Hear the call of the kingdom
to be children of light
with the mercy of heaven,
the humility of Christ;
walking justly before him,
loving all that is right,
that the life of Christ may shine through us.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Hear the call of the kingdom
to reach out to the lost
with the Father's compassion
in the wonder of the cross,
bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in him.

*King of heaven, we will answer the call.
We will follow, bringing hope to the world,
filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim
salvation in Jesus' name.*

Keith Getty (b. 1974)/Kristyn Getty (b. 1980)/Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Blessing

May God give us grace to follow the saints
in humility, righteousness and peace.
And may the blessing of the God of hope,
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
go with us and remain with us, always.

Amen.