



**All Saints Sunday**

**November 1, 2020**

**Introduction**

*All Saints celebrates the baptized people of God, living and dead, who are the body of Christ. As November heralds the dying of the landscape in many northern regions, the readings and liturgy call us to remember all who have died in Christ and whose baptism is complete. We trust that the promises of God will be fulfilled and that all tears will be wiped away in the new Jerusalem.*

**Thanksgiving for Baptism**

*You may want to have a small bowl of water available to remind you of your baptism!*

In the name of the Father, and of the † Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,  
we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.  
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God,  
for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters  
and by your Word you created the world,  
calling forth life in which you took delight.  
Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family.  
Through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom.  
At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By water and your Word you claim us as daughters and sons,  
making us heirs of your promise and servants of all.  
We praise you for the gift of water that sustains life,  
and above all we praise you for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.  
Shower us with your Spirit,  
and renew our lives with your forgiveness, grace, and love.  
To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn ELW # 427 / LBW # 176**

***For All Your Saints, O Lord***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading: Revelation 7:9-17

*The book of Revelation is written to seven churches in western Asia Minor during a time of great oppression. Today's reading is a response to the question asked in 6:17: "Who is able to stand?" The writer gives the faithful the assurance of God's protection and a vision of victory.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## Psalmody: Psalm 34:1-10, 22

<sup>1</sup>I will bless the LORD at all times; the praise of God shall ever be in my mouth.

<sup>2</sup>**I will glory in the LORD; let the lowly hear and rejoice.**

<sup>3</sup>Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD; let us exalt God's name together.

<sup>4</sup>**I sought the LORD, who answered me and delivered me from all my terrors.**

<sup>5</sup>Look upon the LORD and be radiant, and let not your faces be ashamed.

<sup>6</sup>**I called in my affliction, and the LORD heard me  
and saved me from all my troubles.**

<sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear the LORD and delivers them.

<sup>8</sup>**Taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are they who take refuge in God!**

<sup>9</sup>Fear the LORD, you saints of the LORD, for those who fear the LORD lack nothing.

<sup>10</sup>**The lions are in want and suffer hunger,  
but those who seek the LORD lack nothing that is good.**

<sup>22</sup>O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants,  
and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.

## Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

*A saint is one who has been set apart by God for God's purposes. God, out of divine love, set us apart to be the children of God. Our holy hope is that we shall see God as God really is.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## **Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12**

*In the Beatitudes, Jesus provides a unique description of those who are blessed with God's favor. His teaching is surprising and shocking to those who seek wealth, fame, and control over others.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## **Reflection on the Text**

Jana Strukova, the executive director of the **Mary and Martha Center for Women and Community Care** in Albemarle, asked me recently if she could interview me about my experience during the pandemic. She and I sat down one day this week to talk on camera. You should be able to watch the video of this interview on the Mary and Martha Facebook page sometime soon. Her very first question asked what I have found the most challenging aspect of this time.

My response to her was the grief and loss that many of us have experienced. Not just the sickness and death caused by Covid, or even the loss of jobs or freedom to move about and gather as we please, but the difficulty of grieving after the death of loved ones in this strange time.

Jesus said in the beatitudes which I just read “*Blessed are those that mourn, for they will be comforted.*” And I know that is true, because I know that God provides comfort to those who grieve – often times through the words and actions of others. But I am also aware that grief is different during this time.

Our ability to gather in hospital rooms and homes and nursing homes to be with those who are sick and suffering, and in hospice rooms to keep vigil with those we know are dying, is severely limited during the pandemic. Families rarely receive the condolences of friends in funeral homes. The ability to gather safely for large church funerals and to sing the songs of our faith together has seemingly evaporated. And it is nearly impossible for extended families to share a meal after a funeral and tell stories of their loved one's life.

The way we process death and loss as a culture and in our church changed dramatically. Overnight.

Add to that the increased death toll of the pandemic, and the grief that we experience as a congregation, community, and country is simply staggering.

But Jesus did not say “blessed are those who mourn, except in a pandemic or other difficult time.” So we can cling to the promise that he gave us – in all circumstances. Those who grieve will be comforted.

While none of us can know from our own experience what lies beyond death, we trust in the promises we find throughout scripture, especially in Jesus' promises to remain with us always and to prepare a place for us for eternity. Those words provide us comfort as we live, even in grief.

The other texts we read today help to provide that comfort, too:

From the reminder in First John that we are loved, even beyond our understanding by a gracious God, who makes us his beloved children in the waters of our baptism. We can live each day of our lives in this world, secure in that love. We trust in God's love now, while we wait to see God in his glory when he is revealed to us fully, in the life to come.

The passage we read from Psalm 34 reminds us to praise God even in difficult times, encourages us with words of hope for rescue in times of trouble, and even gives us words to pray: "*O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants, and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.*"

And from the seventh chapter of Revelation, we read a passage that is frequently quoted at funerals. First, the vision of a great multitude of people from every place in the world, standing before God in great joy singing praise to the Almighty God.

Who are those people in the vision? All who are robed in Christ's righteousness, who have come through the trials of life, and who are securely in God's care for eternity, free from hunger or thirst, pain or suffering.

Those people are us, dear ones. The beloved of God, made holy saints in the waters of our baptism, led through life in faith, forgiven of our failures and sins, protected in every difficulty - including pandemics - and comforted in every time of grief, until we are gathered by the throne of God forever. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day ELW # 423**

***Shall We Gather at the River***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

**Nicene Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Lord of all the saints, we praise you for evangelists and martyrs whose sacrifices witness to your gospel across time and space. Inspire us by their courage to carry our faith to new people and places around us. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of every place, the universe proclaims your greatness from generation to generation. Bless the work of naturalists, conservationists, and park rangers who train our attention to the wonders of the world you have made. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of every nation, guide this country—red states and blue states, rural voters and urban voters, young and old—as we share in another national election. Kindle hearts eager to understand our common needs and seek our common good. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of every blessing, your Son’s blessing came to those living with poverty, grief, hunger, thirst, and persecution. Shape our vision of the saints to match his own. Awaken in us your call to serve all who suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of every venture, anoint us with the missionary spirit of the early church. Bless all new missions of our synod. Empower testimony from new communities of faith to shape a diverse witness to your saving power. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Lord of every time, countless are the multitudes you have called by name and gathered to yourself. Comfort us as we grieve those who have died in the past year, especially Eddie and Jean Parker, Elaine Crawley, Carrie Barbee, Terry Almond, Van Kluttz, Betty Jane Hill, Jack Kluttz, George R. Hahn, Jeff Cauble, and Jerry Petrea. In faith, may we join with them in ceaseless praise. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

### **Lord’s Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn ELW # 551**

***The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today’s reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.