



Introduction

Of all three years of the lectionary cycle, this year's All Saints readings have the most tears. Isaiah and Revelation look forward to the day when God will wipe away all tears; in John's gospel, Jesus weeps along with Mary and all the gathered mourners before he demonstrates his power over death. On All Saints Day we celebrate the victory won for all the faithful dead, but we grieve for our beloved dead as well, knowing that God honors our tears. We bring our grief to the table and find there a foretaste of Isaiah's feast to come.

Confession and Forgiveness

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

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Have mercy on us, O God.

**We confess that we have sinned against you
and against our neighbor.**

**We have built walls instead of tables
and have turned away the stranger.**

**We have sought glory for ourselves
and have treasured that which does not satisfy.**

**Help us to love as you love,
to welcome those you send,
and to treasure mercy and justice.**

**Turn us from our ways to your ways,
and free us to serve those in need. Amen.**

God, who makes all things new,
forgives your sins for ✙ Jesus' sake
and remembers them no more.

Lift up your heads and your hearts.
Yours is the kingdom of God. **Amen.**

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: Isaiah 25:6-9

Isaiah sees a vision of the end of days, when God will gather all people on God's holy mountain and will prepare for them a rich feast. At this banquet God will wipe the tears from all eyes. And there will be no more sorrow, for God will destroy death itself.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 24

¹The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,
the world and those who dwell therein.

²**For the LORD has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.**

³Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD,
and who may stand in God's holy place?

⁴**Those of innocent hands and purity of heart,
who do not swear on God's being, nor do they pledge by what is false.**

⁵They shall receive blessing from the LORD
and righteousness from the God of their salvation.

⁶**Such is the generation of those who seek you, O LORD,
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.**

⁷Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O everlasting doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

⁸**Who is this King of glory?**

The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!

⁹Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, O everlasting doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6a

Here is a vision of the new heaven and new earth in which God resides fully with God's people so that mourning, despair, and pain have been eradicated. These renewing words from the God who spans all of time are trustworthy and true.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: John 11:32-44

Through the raising of Lazarus, Jesus offers the world a vision of the life to come, when death and weeping will be no more.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

This All Saints Sunday, I identify with Mary and Martha more than usual. Like them, I am mourning the loss of a brother. It feels as though I am looking straight at Jesus myself as I read the words of the gospel: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

The truth is that we are all grieving this year. The loss of those near and dear; the loss of hundreds of thousands of God's beloved children of all ages to the Covid-19 pandemic. We also carry the burden of months and months of isolation, worry, and sickness. We come to this day with heavy hearts.

Jesus, in his own grief, asks where they have placed the body of his friend Lazarus. In words that echo his invitation for others to come and follow him, earlier in the gospel, Jesus is told "Come and see." And at the same time, skeptics in the crowd scoff at him: If he could restore sight to a blind man, why did he not rush to restore Lazarus to health before his death?

When Jesus asks the villagers to remove the stone that seals the tomb, he continues his conversation with the ever-practical Martha at the grave of her brother "Lord, it has been too long. You can't go in there – it stinks!"

But Jesus does not intend to enter the tomb – instead he calls for Lazarus to rise up and walk out. As the once dead and now alive-again man walks out of his tomb, Jesus tells the crowd to unbind him, and let him go.

We've heard this story and read these words before. But imagine being there in that moment. First watching your beloved brother die; preparing his body for burial; and helping others seal him up in a tomb. Grieving with your family and friends; and scolding Jesus when he arrives, apparently too late to change what has happened. Then imagine hearing Jesus call your brother's name and watching him emerge from the tomb, restored to life. I wish I could identify with Mary and Martha in that moment.

In the surprise, the joy, and then the realization that Jesus had the power not just to heal the sick and restore sight to the blind. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus all learned that day that Jesus had power over life and death.

We know that, too – through reading this gospel passage and others. Jesus, the only Son of God, has power beyond our imagining. Jesus has power to heal, to forgive our sins, and to restore us to life! And we know that not too much later, Jesus himself rose from the dead and left behind his grave clothes, restored to life.

We may not see dead men rise up to walk again on this earth, but we often take for granted the miracles we do witness on a daily basis. We see the wonders of creation each day. We routinely see health restored to those who are sick; we often witness the hungry being fed through the generosity of others; and we see love toward God and one another growing around us. All of those are truly miracles.

As we celebrate All Saints Sunday, we recall those who have gone before us from life into death. We recall loved ones and members of our congregation; especially those who have died in the past year. We remember that each one was not only beloved by other people - each one was a beloved child of God, who will be restored to life in the presence of God for all of eternity.

This is what we do on All Saints Sunday. We remember the lives of the saints who have gone before us. We celebrate the things they did; the love and the life and the lessons they shared with us. We mourn the loss of their presence among us.

All of us who have been baptized have become the saints of God. Not through our own efforts, but purely because of the grace-filled, loving plan and actions of God. In the waters of our baptism, we were named and claimed; washed and forgiven; and transformed into the Holy Ones of God. When this life comes to an end for each of us, we will be welcomed into the glorious presence of God for eternity. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 423/WOV # 690

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

Eternal God, you hold firm amid the changes of this world. Hear us now as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need.

A brief silence.

Merciful God, we give thanks for all missionaries who have brought your message of hope to new communities and wiped tears away. Continue to raise up courageous missionaries to share your gospel of hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, we praise you for abundant harvests and the goodness of creation. Create communities of care for your earth so that all land, water, and soil will be celebrated and cherished by future generations of saints. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of peace, we give you thanks for nations of peace that serve as a refuge for all whose homelands are afflicted with violence. Strengthen those who continue to work for peace and support all veterans who carry the scars of war.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of healing, we give you thanks for health care workers who labor around the clock to answer cries for help. Bring wholeness to all who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, addiction, and all who long for healing in any way especially those we name now. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of justice, we praise you for the feeding ministries and for all meals that bring people together for nourishment and fellowship. Bless chefs, bakers, servers, dishwashers, communion assistants, and meal ministry coordinators.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of the ages, we give you thanks for the saints of this congregation who have inspired, challenged, loved, and taught us, especially those who have died during the past year. Wipe away our tears and lead us by their example until we feast together on your holy mountain. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our protection and strength, we entrust to you all for whom we pray. Remain with us always, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **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 # 427 / LBW # 176 *For All Your Saints, O Lord*

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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