

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9; Revelation 21:1-6a; John 11:32-44 Ps 24

All Saints Day

Today we celebrate All Saints' Day. **On this feast we remember all Christians, past and present.** The day reminds us that God has redeemed us in Christ as a family, as a community — the communion of saints, as we say in the creed. We remember that we are one with thousands of others who, with us, are saints of God.

We give thanks for those who have gone before us in faith, and in prayer continue to entrust them to God's mercy and keeping. Hebrews says they are a great cloud of witnesses, urging us to follow Christ no matter the cost.

We also remember that through Jesus, God has defeated death for all our sakes. We are a people of the resurrection. We are persuaded that life, creation and hope overrule death, destruction and despair.

As we remember those who have walked in faith ahead of us, we call to mind the hope we have. We don't need to celebrate halloween, to ward off the bad spirits. The first reason is we call on Christ's protection, and have the armour of the Spirit that Ephesians 6:10-18 speaks of:

We take our stand against the devil's schemes, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil by dressing in God's armour:

- the belt of truth buckled around our waist
- the breastplate of righteousness in place
- our feet in gospel-of-peace shoes
- the shield of faith protecting us from spiritual attack
- because Jesus' work has made us clean, the helmet of salvation rests on our heads
- and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, is in our hands
- and our on our lips are all kinds of prayers and requests that the Spirit gives for ourselves and others

The second reason that we don't need to worry about Halloween, is that we while death is certain, often unexpected, a time of sadness, pain and separation, it is no threat to us in the long run. For death is not the end, it has no sting. Jesus has defeated our Halloween enemy - now evil cannot overwhelm us and death is only a gateway to the new heavens and the new earth. **We are a resurrection people.**

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

The words from the Wisdom of Solomon remind us of this hope. This passage anticipates later Christian doctrines of the communion of saints, life after death, and the justice of God. It insists that human perceptions regarding the dead are not as they seem. People who lack faith, and accept only what their senses tell them, think death is a disaster, an experience of destruction, and a cause for despair. There is talk of a purified, vibrant life beyond the grave. For all death does to break and shatter our lives, this passage assures us, it is not the whole story.

We celebrate All Saints Day to write this hope of immortality on our hearts.

Ps 24

Considering the hope before us, and the God who has brought salvation and resurrection to his people, Psalm 24 directs us to faithful service in the present with our gaze on the future, as we await the glorious return of our King.

It begins with a confession of YHWH as creator and lord of all (vv. 1–2), goes on to explain the conditions for worship, warning us against approaching God too casually (vv. 3–6); and concludes with a celebration of YHWH's return as triumphant ruler (vv. 7–10).

The hope of resurrection, then is not only about individual believers having life after death, it is about renewed community and the renewal of all creation, where goodness, holiness and right-living will be present forevermore, where God will dwell with his people.

On All Saints Day we celebrate the kingdom of God in all its fullness, and anticipate Christ's return.

John 11:32-44

Centuries later we have John's Gospel and the story of Lazarus. The Jews at this time believed that there would be resurrection in the afterlife. Just before the verses of today's reading there is a little conversation between Martha and Jesus:

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

She trusted in the promises and hope of God, but she never expected to see it happen with her own eyes. She knew that Jesus had power to do something amazing...so Jesus picks up on what she already believes...

He explains to her, “**I am the resurrection and the life.** The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:21-25)

He is putting together what she already believed, and connecting it to himself.

She might have trusted what he said...but the last thing she expected was to see her brother walk out of the tomb. Like everyone else, she was worried about the smell that would come out when they moved the stone away.

Martha's sister Mary comes and voices her despair...if only you'd been here earlier...they had faith in his capacity to heal...but that time had passed, in their mind they must wait for the final day of God to see their brother again.

It's then that Jesus weeps. I am certain it was partly a result of his love for the family, and his own grief...but I suspect he also weeps that after so much time spent with him, the people can only see what they are accustomed to seeing. They trust and believe in him, in his power and even in resurrection...but they can't really hear what he means, how much he is offering them, and all humanity, when he says: **I am the resurrection and the life.**

Jesus tries to lead them on to greater faith...

'If you believe you will see the glory of God' - life out of death. Triumph and joy in the scene of devastation and grief.

'Lazarus come out!' he calls. And Lazarus comes out.

This resurrection prepared the people for Jesus own resurrection, from which he would never die, where he defeated death, and through which he won salvation for his people.

On All Saints Day we remember Jesus power over death, and trust his promise of resurrection is reliable.

Revelation 21:1-6a

The story hasn't finished has it? We are still waiting. The fullness of God's promises are on the horizon, even if we have the downpayment in our lives.

We experience the now of salvation and hope, and the not yet of everything God has in mind. Do you remember Jesus left his disciples with the words...

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going (John 14:2-4).

He's gone ahead to prepare the banquet hall of God, the place where he will kick off the celebration of the opening of the new heavens and the new earth for habitation, the day the red ribbon will be cut.

The reading from Revelation's gives us a glimpse fo the new Holy City. It is magnificent! It will not have any walls separating ethnic groups, no tanks or disputes over the Temple site. The new city that comes down from heaven, is pure and spotless, free from corruption, conflict and sin. Finally God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and God will dwell with his people, in peace and righteousness forever.

'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!' (Revelation 21:3-4)

Today **WE** hear the promises and hope of God, secured by Jesus, guaranteed to us by the presence of his Spirit in our lives, who stamps us as God's children, inheritors of the family estate with our brother Jesus.

Our place cards are at the banquet table, everything is being made ready. The heavens and the earth will be made new. And as saved, changed and resurrected people we will share in its delights for evermore.

As we celebrate All Saints, with the first readers of Revelation in the early church, we set our eyes on the future. Look to the horizon. See what awaits us and all God's people and may this vision bring light to your eyes and hope to your journey as you walk in faithfulness to Jesus.

Conclusion

On All Saints we remember those who have died and give thanks for them. We remember that through Jesus Christ, God has defeated death: we remember we are a people of resurrection.

We write this hope of immortality on our hearts, we celebrate the promise of the kingdom of God in all its fullness, and anticipate Christ's return. We remember Jesus power over death, and trust his promise of resurrection is reliable and with the first readers of Revelation in the early church, we set our eyes on the future.

We are persuaded that life, re-creation and hope overrule death, destruction and despair. We take hold of the promises of God given to us by Jesus, and we walk with his Spirit's hope with all his people until we see all things made new.

Lazarus' would die again, his tomb is in Cyprus. He is waiting for the last banquet. But Jesus words remain:

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Do you believe this? Take hold of Jesus words. As you stand with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, may the truth of God's words rest in your hearts today, and everyday, until you see Jesus face to face. Amen.

Feasting on the word.

Summary

On this feast of All Saints we remember all Christians, past and present. The day reminds us that God has redeemed us in Christ as a family, as a community – the communion of saints, as we say in the creed.

We remember that we are one with thousands of others who, with us, are saints of God. We give thanks for them and in prayer continue to entrust them to God's mercy and keeping. They are a great cloud of witnesses, as Hebrews says, all those who have followed Christ's call. They urge us to live follow Christ no matter the cost.

We also remember that through Jesus Christ, God has defeated death for all our sakes. We are a people of the resurrection. We are persuaded that life, creation and hope overrule death, destruction and despair. We remember Jesus has gone ahead of us to prepare the banquet hall of God, the place where he will kick off the celebration of the opening of the new heavens and the new earth for habitation, the day the red ribbon will be cut. Today we celebrate the kingdom of God as it will be in all its fullness, and anticipate Christ's return.

I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.

Do you believe this? Take hold of Jesus words. As you stand with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, may the truth of God's words rest in your hearts today, and everyday, until you see Jesus face to face. Amen.