

Sermon and Readings All Saints 1st November 2026

Revelation 7.9–17

⁹ After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' ¹¹ And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, ¹² singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.' ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' ¹⁴ I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. ¹⁶ They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

Psalm 34.1–10, 34.22

¹ I will bless the Lord continually:
his praise shall be always in my mouth.
² Let my soul boast of the Lord:
the humble shall hear it and rejoice.
³ O praise the Lord with me:
let us exalt his name together.
⁴ For I sought the Lord's help and he answered:
and he freed me from all my fears.
⁵ Look towards him and be bright with joy:
your faces shall not be ashamed.
⁶ Here is a wretch who cried, and the Lord heard me:
and saved me from all my troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him:
and delivers them in their need.

⁸ O taste and see that the Lord is good:
happy are they that hide in him!

⁹ Fear the Lord, all you his holy ones:
for those who fear him never lack.

¹⁰ Lions may suffer want and go hungry:
but those who seek the Lord lack nothing good.

²² The Lord ransoms the lives of his servants:
and none who hide in him will be destroyed.

1 John 3.1–3

¹ See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³ And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Matthew 5.1–12

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: ³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Sermon

The first verse of a little known hymn "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God" written by Lesbia Scott in 1929 ends with the line: "The saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too."

On the first November 1944 a requiem eucharist was celebrated for William Temple, one of the great leaders of the Anglican Church in the twentieth century. In the thirty-five years between his ordination as a deacon and his death, Temple was a parish priest, headmaster of a boys' school, convener of conferences on the role of the Christian faith in public and political life. He laid the groundwork for what is now the World Council of Churches.

First, as Archbishop of York and then Archbishop of Canterbury he held the two highest positions in the Church of England. Somewhere in the midst of all this, on average, he wrote a book every two years.

It seems appropriate that a Christian of such significance as William Temple was laid to rest on the day the Church sets aside to honour the life and ministry of every baptised person.

Putting Temple's life and Scott's hymn together leads me to think of the countless people who have done God's work in the world.

In the last century we have people like William Temple, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Desmond Tutu, and Brother Rodger from Taizé, Mary MacKillop, and there are also countless unknown faithful women and men who have ministered God's grace.

We have heard today's gospel from Matthew so many times that it is easy to miss it's significance.

At the heart of the Beatitudes is the relationship of being "blessed" and being a "saint". Together, they reflect our spiritual identity as Christians. We are both blessed and set apart by God.

Have you ever taken the risk and applied the Beatitudes to yourself?

Compared to many people in the world I am not "poor"; anyone who knows me would not call me "meek;" and I know I am not always "pure in heart".

But, in some ways, even our great Christian role models did not have these qualities.

Archbishop Temple was born into a privileged family, Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, and Desmond Tutu certainly were not meek in speaking up for those who could not speak for themselves. Mary MacKillop was passionate in her quest to improve the educational opportunities for children and her journey was not without controversy. Brother Rodger was a tireless advocate for youth and peace.

When we look at these nineteenth and twentieth-century saints, do we see any similarity to ourselves?

In today's gospel Jesus tells us: hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, seeking peace, along with mourning, gentleness, and enduring persecution are the marks of being blessed.

Exercising these virtues does not mean we have to dedicate our life to the Church. It does require courage, because showing mercy, or doing what is right, is not always popular.

The history of the Christian faith is a history of people who love mercy, justice and peace and have been willing to stand up for them. It is the story of people who have given shelter to the poor, dedicated their lives to healing the sick, campaigned to free slaves, advocated for gender equality, agitated for the inclusion of the disabled, neurodiverse, and other discriminated against members of the community.

Essentially, they are those who work for a more equitable society for all. People who believe that God created everyone and everything and are willing to treat all of their sisters and brothers as member of God's beloved family.

It is the history of great saints, to be sure.

It is also the history of nameless saints.

They are :

- They are the folk who routinely give of their time to feed the hungry, or visit the sick, those who care for the young, those who protest and advocate when they see injustice in our social and political systems.
- They are the folk who work to produce goods and services that sustain our lives in a way that respects the earth as God's precious creation.
- They are the folk who take time to mentor a child or to mourn with the bereaved.
- They are the folk who pray, who create music, art, drama and poetry.
- They are the folk who inspire and encourages people of faith, those are seeking faith and even those with no faith.
- They are the nameless people who work for what is right, and good and fair for all people, rather than for themselves or the people like them.
- They are the folk who live their faith, who love God, love and serve their neighbour.

The saints of God are among us, and touch our lives every day.

In a church full of stained glass windows depicting great Christians from the past; martyrs, bishops, priests and nuns, also artists, poets and politicians, a young boy asked his mother, "who are these people?" She explained the

windows to him, saying that the people pictured there were saints. The boy responded, "Oh, I get it. Saints are people that the sun shines through."

Yes, Saints are people who live in the love of God, people who let the light of God shine through them.

It doesn't matter if they are; an archbishop, a civil rights leader, an elderly nun in India, a campaigner for justice in South Africa, a monk in France, or members of this community of faith.

They are the folk who provide shelter to the homeless, who work to provide for the needs of their community, who provide a listening ear at the garage sale, who visit the lonely, who pray, teach, encourage, practice generosity.

They are the folk who ask the question "when?" And are answered, "*In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.*" (Matt 25.40)

They are the folk who share a common vision of righteousness, mercy, and peace in response to the grace of God in their lives.

The saints of God are among us.

The saints of God are us.

God has graced each and every one of us with the mission of advancing the kingdom of God here on earth.

None of us should feel discouraged because our part doesn't seem very significant..

It is the our part and no one else can do it.

The great saints understood this.

Archbishop Temple wrote, "*the whole harmony of creation depends upon the offering by each humblest spirit of its own appropriate note of music which no other can sound without discord.*"

We each have our part to sing.

No one else, great or small, can sing it for us.

It doesn't matter how well we sing.

If only the beautiful and strong voices join the chorus, the music will be thin and lifeless.

Let us each sing our part boldly as we sing with all the saints of God.

Come, join in the song of your fellow saints.