

SUNDAY November 2, 2025

“Seeing God in Others and Waiting”

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2 :1-4 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12 Luke 6:20-31

“Holy, holy, holy,” is one of our most beloved hymns of faith because it is a hymn of praise focusing on God in Three Persons- Trinity. Yet it also reminds us of our place in creation and the order in which those who have served God in their lives present their praise to God in God’s heavenly realm. *Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee, Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea.* Here the saints share their praise and place their golden crowns of near the river of life. Others who offer praise to God as reflected in this hymn are cherubim and seraphim- God’s angels. And all are together praising God! *Cherubim and seraphim, falling down before thee, Who was and is and evermore shall be.*

When we reflect on these beautiful words of those gathered in God’s presence and are praising God, do you envision yourself, too? Or just who is there in God’s presence?

Today is All Souls’ Day, the third day in the tradition of Allhallowtide, a Christian period of 3 days dedicated to remembering the dead that begins with All Hallows’ Eve (October 31) and is followed by All Hallows’, or All Saints’, Day (November 1) and All Souls’ Day. These days were once and in some locations still high and holy days of the Christian church to remember those who faithfully served God on earth and whose memory lives in the hearts of those still living.

Halloween was not the spectacle that it is now where the goal is to gain candy as one wears a costume different from their everyday attire or to be scared by displays of monsters, crypts, mummies or skeletons. It was a day to prepare in the celebration of the saints. And All Saints day traditionally was had high attendance at services because it was a day to celebrate those people who lived, died and were recognized by the Church as saints. Saints like Mary, Joseph, Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila, Valentine, Patrick, as well as the apostles - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. It was also a time to remember those people both known and unknown who had served the Church in faith through their earthly life and had now died and living eternally with their God- their Creator, Saviour Jesus and the Spirit which moves amongst us all.

All Saints’ Day was known to be a day when people many people would come to pray for their loved ones who were resting in Christ. It was a day of prayer and remembering and it was also a day of change. For in the evening of Oct 31, 1517, a young priest named Martin Luther changed church history by protesting against the sale of indulgences. He nailed to the doors of “All Saints Church” a letter and a copy of his "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of

Indulgences" otherwise known as the 95 Theses. These statements were what he deemed wrong with the established church. This began the Reformation movement of the Church leading to Protestantism. But what is ironic, is that many of the reformed churches still recognize the saints of old for who they were and what they did in their days on earth. We also do this today.

We still recognize St. Valentine and Patrick, for their gift of honouring love, and teaching others of God. Of course many of our churches are named after apostles or leaders. But these names reflect certain people who lived many years ago and yes they are in the presence of God. But how would you define a Saint today? We often hear stories of people who are saint like but who are the saints we remember today?

A saint is not someone who is flawless or a super believer or doer. A saint is a person who claims Christ and then seeks to emulate him according to the grace given. All of us- all those who come to church or wish they could, all those who claim faith in Jesus. All who struggle and fail or succeed. All of us who gather and all who are around us. You are saints.

But it is not something we do by calling each other Saint So & So when we see each other. Yet when we think of all saints or all souls- we remember those who are now in God's heaven. But we need to pay attention now to those around us because we all learn from one another.

One modern named saint is Mother Teresa or Saint Mother Teresa, who founded the Missionaries of Charity. Mother Teresa lived most of her life in India and carried out her mission work there. She died on September 5, 1997 and was canonised by the Catholic Church as Saint Teresa of Calcutta. The anniversary of her death, 5 September, is now observed as her feast day. But we who are sitting here in this moment are not Saint Mother Teresa- we are who God made us to be for the here and now. And we are saints because we live and have faith in God.

Habakkuk experienced the wonder of faithful people yet just now there were also people who did not live saintly lives. So Habakkuk complains to God asking for God to listen because of what he is experiencing amongst the people- violence, wrongdoing, destruction, strife, contention, slack laws, injustice, and wickedness prevailing over good. The prophet continues his complaints but when God responds he does what is asked. He writes the vision plainly so that all may see it. It is a vision of the end and it states that the righteous will live by their faith. What does this mean for us as we seek to live and be saint-like?

Paul answers this in the passage read from 2 Thessalonians by stating that this community's faith is growing abundantly and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Paul said he boasts about this church family because of their steadfast faith when

facing the persecutions and afflictions which they have endured. Paul then states that when he prays to God about them, that they will fulfill his power with every good resolve and work of faith. This is for the purpose of Jesus being glorified in them and they in Christ according to God's grace. This is what enables faithful people to be called saints!

All Souls Day-- is a day of prayer and remembrance for those who lived, loved and have died- known and unknown. And it is a day that we may reflect on our own lives and wonder about who we are- are we faithful to God? Will we be able to adore and praise God along with the saints, cherubim and seraphim angels? How might we consider this?

Jesus' teaching in Luke 6: 20-31 describes the contrasts between blessings and woes which again calls us each to consider whether we are saint-like in what we say and do and what we might consider will occur in God's heaven.

Luke contrasts 4 statements of blessings/ vs woes: 1) Poor/rich Blessed are the poor - yours is the kingdom of God. Just because you are poor you can still receive God's favour. And, in contrast- woe to you who are rich for have (already) received your compensation. That is, the rich are already rewarded.

2) hungry/ full Those now hungry will become full; and those who are full will become hungry;

3) weep/laugh Blessed are those who cry because there will come a time to laugh. Woe to those who laugh- there will come to cry

4) blessings to those who hate, exclude, revile and defame you on account of your relationship with the Son of Man- Jesus/ woe when people speak well of you for this is what they did to the false prophets. Remember to whom you belong!

Why does Jesus share these statements? So that each of us may understand that one day we will be received by Christ when we come into His kingdom. When this time comes, you will leap for joy and be rewarded. This reward in heaven is in knowing God, and praising Him with the saints and angels forever.

Whose souls do you remember today? Who do you remember as influencing your life in Christ Jesus? Maybe it was your parents/ grandparents who first taught you the importance of praying to God. Or maybe you were introduced to Jesus at camp, Vacation Bible School or Sunday School and you remember the circle of friends gathered together with a person of faith. Maybe just maybe you were mentored by a person who shared God's message to you and this helped to deal with a personal problem which is known only to God. Who are the saints in your life? Past and present?

And who by definition are the saints and the souls you recognize today? They are the ones who serve God in faith and wait patiently for God's Spirit to act in you. They are the ones

who God sees as living life abundantly in hope and having the knowledge that one day they will be singing along with the saints and angels in heaven. And these souls- that is people- whom you have known and loved will remain in your hearts always but you need to cherish their memories, review the gifts as they gave them to you and give thanks for the time shared together.

We all know time goes by fast, but what is key is that one day when we will all gather in God's heavenly kingdom we will be one with each other for all of eternity. This is the gift and promise made by God to us all. We just need to believe and observe God in others and wait for Christ to act again in our lives.

Let us pray

Holy God as we experience this All Saints/ Souls Day we recognize those who have influenced our lives and we praise you for you created all of us to be one with each other in Christ Jesus. Comfort us as we need comforting in this moment as we recall the love given and received with those who are now with you. Enable us to share and show our gratitude and love with those whom we worship at this time and those people yet unknown to us.

Hear our prayers O God as we offer our thanks and praise to you for we are one in Christ. SILENCE. IN Jesus Name we pray AMEN

Luke makes a broader point by these reversals of fortune, rich and poor, hungry and filled, mourners and glad ones; God is in the business of turning human realities upside down.