

Saturday 2 November 2024

All Soul's Day



Since its foundation, Christians have recognised that the Church, the assembled people of God, is at its most perfect when it recognises its unity in God's redeeming love with all who have said, who say now, and who will say in the fullness of time, 'Jesus is Lord.' On this day, we remember those who have lived this faith and then passed from this world into the next.

Sermon © Revd Denise Owen.

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The hymns are YouTube links. Click the links to hear them.

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The Gathering

We meet to remember our loved ones who have died in Christ, and to comfort one another in our sadness

In the name of Christ, who died and was raised by the glory of the Father, we welcome you: grace, mercy and peace be with you.

All And also with you

I have set the Lord always before me

All He is at my right hand, and I shall not fall.

Show us your mercy, O Lord

All and grant us your salvation.

For with you is the well of life

All and in your light shall we see light.

Hymn 1 [Amazing grace!](#)

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

Acclamation

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer,
grant us, with all the faithful departed,
the sure benefits of your Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection that,
in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ,
we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

All Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still

sinner, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:5-11

This is the word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God

Hymn 2 The King of Love my Shepherd is

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Jesus said, 'All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.'

John 6:37-40

This is the word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God

Sermon

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

You may be familiar with the following words: 'Death is nothing at all: I have only slipped away into the next room. Why should I be out of mind, because I am out of sight. I am waiting for you for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner. All is well. One brief moment and all will be as it was before. How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again.'

They are words from an address by Henry Scott Holland for the lying-in-state of King Edward VII. This was a time when the country was in deep mourning and concerned about the future. The address and these words were meant to comfort and reassure, and these words are often used as a reading at funerals.

Scott Holland is seeking to reassure the listener that the promises of God, the sure and certain hope of the resurrection, are ours. It is a reassurance and confirmation that we share in the resurrection of Christ, and that death does not have the ultimate victory. Words of hope.

However, there are other words from this address which describe the brutal and jarring effect of death. 'So ruthless, so blundering, this death that we must die. It is the pit of destruction. It wrecks, it defeats, it shatters.' A visceral response to and description of the break between life and death, and the affect it has on those left behind.

These two contrasting descriptions of death demonstrate the distance between what our faith teaches us, and what we may experience in bereavement. It is perhaps, when we most need to hold onto our hope of eternal life, that it is hardest to accept. Whether it's facing the loss of a loved one, or the prospect of our own end, it's at those times death can come closest to driving out the image of life. It is perhaps, at those times, that the hope of resurrection to eternal life seems most distant from us.

Death can appear so final, so irreversible, that even the words of Jesus Christ himself can seem to be hollow.

That is why we commemorate All Souls' Day, to acknowledge the hurt and the pain, and how challenging it is to believe in life, in the face of death. Today we acknowledge that we are people who grieve and that for us grief is real and painful and frequently long-lasting, and we do this before we acknowledge that we are Christians who believe and hope in a risen Saviour.

For us the two ways of viewing death we read earlier, as nothing at all or as a ruthless pit of destruction, are both valid. But they are not of equal weight nor are they equally true. Christ, the person of Jesus, rose from the dead. He conquered death in that moment, and therefore our hope in him is real and personal. We don't believe in eternal life in a general non-specific way, we believe in it as an objective reality. We have a sure and certain hope of life because it is a promise made by Christ. Christ's resurrection is the event that we as Christians share and which is the foundation of our faith. If what is most significant in the Church's teaching does not speak to us at the most extreme of times and in the most extreme of experiences, it doesn't speak to us at all.

The Christian hope of resurrection does not negate the pain of loss, or the longing for a loved one to be with us once again. We may even feel in the words of Scott Holland that our loved one 'has slipped into the next room' and wish we could simply open the door and be together again. That is not what we are promised by our faith, however.

The resurrection of Christ demonstrates that God is with us at all times. We are not disposable, and left alone at death or in grief. God is the continuing presence with us in death and in bereavement. We know that God is faithful, and it is this which we hold onto. Life after bereavement doesn't continue as before, but knowing the faithfulness of God means we can face the death of loved ones, and our own death differently, perhaps even with confidence. God's loving mercy endures for ever on those who love him. When we hold onto that with hope, then at that moment that we might be able to say with Henry Scott Holland, 'Death is nothing at all.' Amen

Hymn 3 O God, our help in ages past

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Prayers

Almighty God, you have knit your chosen people together in one communion, in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Give to your whole Church in heaven and on earth your light and your peace.

Grant that all who have been baptised into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to newness of life, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass with him to our joyful resurrection.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that your Holy Spirit may lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

Grant to your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

Grant to all who mourn a sure confidence in your loving care, that casting all their sorrow on you, they may know the consolation of your love.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

May we have strength to meet the days ahead in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those we love.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

Help us, we pray, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

Grant us the grace to entrust those whom we remember to your never-failing love which sustained them in this life. Enfold them in the arms of your mercy and remember them according to the favour you bear for your people.

Lord, hear us

All Lord, graciously hear us

We gather together these prayers, using the words that Jesus himself taught us:

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

Lord Christ our Redeemer,
in the day of your coming raise us up,
and set us at your right hand in the day when your greatness shall appear.

Keep the living by your grace and give resurrection to the dead.

We ask this in your name,

O Lord, our resurrection and our life.

All Amen.

The Commemoration

You, Christ, are the King of glory,

All the eternal Son of the Father.

You overcame the sting of death

All and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.

**All We believe that you will come to be our judge,
Come then, Lord, and help your people,
bought with the price of your own blood;
and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.**

During the Church service, we read aloud the names of loved ones. We do so in four batches during the following litany of prayers and Bible verses. Candles are lit.

I am the resurrection, and the life, says the Lord; those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

(pause)

We remember: **Group A**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort, deal graciously we pray, with those who mourn, that casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love.

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(pause)

We remember: **Group B**

Risen Lord Jesus, draw near to us as we walk the lonely road. Pierce our weary sorrow and gladden our heavy hearts as you go with us, and bring us in the end to your heavenly table.

The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

(pause)

We remember: **Group C**

Be present, Spirit of the living God, and renew us in our pain and grief; so that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may rest on your eternal changelessness.

The Lamb who is seated at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

(pause)

We remember: **Group D**

and all those whom we remember today in the silence of our hearts.

(pause)

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints: where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. You only are immortal, the creator and maker of all: and we are mortal, formed from the dust of the earth, and unto earth shall we return. For so you ordained when you created us, saying: 'Dust you are and to dust you shall return.' All of us go down to the dust, yet weeping at the grave, we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Hymn 4 **The day thou gavest**

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

Let us pray, as we say together:

**All Hear us, O merciful Father, as we remember in love those whom we have placed in your hands.
Acknowledge, we pray, the sheep of your own fold,
lambs of your own flock,
sinners of your own redeeming.
Enfold them in the arms of your mercy,
in the blessed rest of everlasting peace,
and in the glorious company of the saints of light.
Amen.**

Hymn 5 **The Nunc Dimittis**

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

Loving heavenly Father,
may the death and resurrection of Christ,
which we have celebrated in this service,
bring us, with the faithful departed,
into the peace of your eternal home.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,
our rock and our salvation,
to whom be glory for time and for eternity.

All Amen.

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

All Blessed is the Lord, our strength and our salvation!

Hymn 6 [Jesus lives! thy terrors now](#)

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

The blessing

May God give to you and to all those whom you love,
his comfort and his peace,
his light and his joy,
in this world and the next;
and the blessing of God the almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Neither death nor life can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Thanks be to God!