

Sunday, November 7, 2021 – All Saints Sunday

www.GloriaDeiWinnipeg.org

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.

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.

⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

⁷And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

⁸he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

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 up- | on the seas
and established it up- | on 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 puri- | ty 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 ever- | lasting doors,
that the King of glory | may come in.

⁸**Who is this | King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, might- | y in battle!**

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

¹⁰**Who is this | King of glory?
Truly, the LORD of hosts is the | King of glory.**

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.

¹I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“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;

⁴he 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.”

⁵And 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.” ^{6a}Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.”

Gospel Reading: 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.

³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus began to weep. ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

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, saying “Hear us, O God,” and responding, “your mercy is great.”

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*). 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.**

God of the ages, we give you thanks for the saints of this congregation who have inspired, challenged, loved, and taught us (*those who have died during the past year may be named*). 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.

A reflection for All Saints Sunday...

Unbinding the Living

On All Saints Sunday we remember loved ones who have been laid in the tomb. We know the acute grief of Mary, Martha, and Jesus. We know the reality of death that lies so close. We know that at any moment the phone call could come with news we dread. We live forever in the shadow of death.

At the same time, we also know the little deaths that take place every day. We know the daily disappointments, the betrayal of a friend, a failure at work, a difficult and tumultuous marriage, the loneliness and pain of one longing for something more from life. Beyond that there are the near-constant reminders that much of this world is far from God's kingdom. How easy it is to look and see poverty and injustice, disease and despair all around. Like Lazarus, we are bound tightly in death's clothes: grief, disappointment, hopelessness.

Yet Jesus speaks the last word for us: "Unbind him, and let him go" (John 11:44). This promise is bursting with resurrecting life. This word is spoken by the one who became human and was put in a tomb, but broke through the pervasive stench of death. In the waters of the font, we hear our God speak this word to us. Lifting us out of the waters, God frees us from the binding rags of death and dresses us in the royal clothing of Christ. At the table, we feast with the God in whom we have waited, the God who swallows up death forever. The last word is not death, but life as a beloved child of God.

Clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God's people are called forth from the grave. Fellow saints rush forward to remove the rotting grave clothes. Together the people of God celebrate the hope and promise of resurrection, rising each new day to joyfully serve in the name of the one who is beyond death, Jesus our Savior.

(www.SundaysAndSeasons.com)

