

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025, All Saints Day. Benefice BCP Holy Communion, Stonegrave.

Today we come once again to the celebration of All Saints' Day. Today and All Souls' Day stem from a belief that there is a powerful spiritual bond between those in heaven (the "Church triumphant"), the living (the "Church militant"), and the "Church penitent" which includes the faithful departed. In Methodist theology, All Saints' Day revolves around "giving God solemn thanks for the lives and deaths of his saints", including those who are "famous or obscure". As such, individuals throughout the Church Universal are honoured.

So, what makes a saint? Firstly, we don't become saints by what we do; we become saints by what Jesus did for us, *and then* what we do. We become saints by being baptized into Christ. When we are baptized, we are declared God's beloved children and saints because of what Jesus did because we are already saved, already loved, and already blessed. His death on the cross was done to forgive our sins, and to enable us to become God's beloved saints, to liberate us and transform us if we truly accept the gift of God's grace.

So, we don't have to be St. Francis or Mother Teresa, or any of the northern saints I spoke about a couple of weeks ago to be a saint but nevertheless, we can still admire the great saints, learn from them, imitate them, because their lives are examples of God's grace being lived out for His glory. They were all ordinary people like us who did extraordinary things, and we can be too because we are all saved and blessed by same loving God.

In today's Gospel it might seem that it appears to be a lot of instructions from Jesus on how we are to live, on what it means to be his followers. But that is *not* where this famous sermon Jesus begins. It begins with Jesus looking up at his disciples and blessing them. "*Blessed are you,*" Jesus says before anything else. The order here is

important. First, we are blessed, then we are declared saints.

Jesus looks at his disciples and blesses them. They might be poor, hungry, they might weep, and be hated, and excluded, and even reviled and defamed on account of Jesus, but they are blessed, not because they are perfect, but because Jesus tells them. When we celebrate All Saints today, we are first celebrating the fact that we too are all saints, not because for what we have done or who we are but because Jesus tells us we too are blessed. Is that it then? By knowing that can we sit back and behave how we like and polish our saint's halo? No, the blessing of Jesus changes us, by the power of the Holy Spirit and because of that, we cannot lead our lives any longer motivated by selfishness, hate or bitterness. The blessing transforms us.

So, what happens next? In Scripture, God's people are always blessed for a purpose. When God created Adam and Eve, He blessed them and then said to them, "*Be fruitful and multiply ... and have dominion over every living thing*". They were blessed for a purpose. Then we have God's blessing of Abraham when God said: "*I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*". Again, blessed for a purpose.

This is what St Paul means when he prays for the Ephesians, "*so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.*" The blessing is found in what St Paul describes as 'this glorious inheritance.'

God's people are never just blessed for themselves, but always for others too. When Jesus blessed his disciples, it was for a reason. It was so that the world would be blessed through them. So, it is for, for us, if we really accept and receive the blessing and become saints. We realise then

that we are blessed by Jesus for a reason, not to just call ourselves saints, but to make a difference in this world because to bless someone or something literally means to bestow God's love and grace upon them.

By fulfilling the purpose or vocation we are given, we will then be simply doing for others what Jesus did for us. He blessed us so we can bless others. If we don't bring blessing to others, then we are not saints and we are not inheritors of St Paul's glorious riches. The questions to therefore ask ourselves today then is, "Am I a saint or not?" and "Do I really show in my life that I bring blessing to others and thereby be worthy to be called a saint?"

His blessing remains and is given for all of us to receive as the glorious inheritance and to be the greatest purpose of our lives, to be a blessing to all, to live as saints to the glory of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.