

All Saints Day 2023

Welcome/Introduction; Prayer (Rebecca):

Observing All Saints Day is a new practice for us here at Threads. This is only our second time doing an All Saints service, and last year was only virtual. So for those of you who are here in person, it is good to be with you tonight.

Though All Saints is a new practice for us here at Threads, it is a very old tradition in the life of the global and historic Christian faith. It made sense to our Christian ancestors that our souls benefit from communal remembrance of our loved ones who are with the Lord, and our Spirits are fed and refreshed by a reminder that they are alive and well in the Lord's presence, part of the "Great Cloud of Witnesses" we read about in the book of Hebrews. Not only are they at peace and in glory with the Lord, but their story isn't finished yet - we look forward, together with all the saints, to the day when Christ will return, the trumpet will resound, and we will experience the bodily resurrection from the dead into a new heavens and a new earth where death and dying are no more, and where the lion will lie down with the lamb.

It is typically at Easter that we most fully celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the promise that through the power of his love we all will rise again in him.

It feels fitting to celebrate resurrection in the spring, when crocuses are poking their purple crowns out of the frosty earth, when geese are returning in honking phalanxes, and robins begin again to populate our newly-green lawns. Spring is a hopeful time, and the spirit of Easter is fitting in that season.

But November - November can be bleak.
The colorful flowers and green grass of summer,
and even the brilliant oranges and russets of autumn,
all give way to the grays and browns we'll endure
for the next five or six months.
The warmth has fled the air,
the sun hesitates to show its face,
and the night is much, much longer than the day.

Perhaps it is in this season, even more than in the spring,
when we need to proclaim our hope together,
where we need to raise together the taunt,

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

...thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Our lives are often a November of sorts, aren't they?
Especially when we are suffering loss or failure or disappointment,
or painfully missing someone who has died.
Sometimes things look pretty bleak,
we experience the dark night of the soul;
we read about the promises of God
but we don't always feel their impact.

And so All Saints Day is a day to talk back to the darkness.
To huddle together as the people of God;
as a people who feel our mortality,
who grieve the mortality of our loved ones,
who are sometimes overwhelmed by the darkness of a world
in which children die
and parents are taken from us too soon,
and yet who can say with the Psalmist,

¹¹ Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

Ps 42:11.

We recognize that Jesus won the victory over death
in his own willing death for our sakes and in his resurrection.
We taste that victory in part now,
but a day is coming when we will know it in full.
A day is coming when the tears will be wiped from every eye
as we enter into the life of the age to come,
united once and for all with God and with all those
who have entered into God's presence ahead of us.

So tonight we light candles,
we sing songs of worship,
and we soak in the hope-filled words of Scripture
as we lift up together the names and the memory
of those we have loved and from whom we are now separated by death.

We do this in defiant hope
that, 'though weeping may last for a night, joy comes in the morning.'
We do this in the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
who proclaims, "I am the God of the Living, and not of the dead."
We do all of this in the name of Jesus
through whom we can stand together in confidence
that a day is coming when "faith will be sight,"
and until that day we affirm together
that those we have loved are safe in the arms of the
One who Is Love.

a blessing for the day we mourn our dead (All Saints' day)

Today we are drawn into remembrance. The complexity of love and loss both warms our hearts and chills our bones.

Invisible connections are revealed just as the light of the sun illuminates the lines of a web, we see that our lives are connected to those who are no longer here.

Blessed are we who acknowledge the impressions made by those who've passed a child's nose, a joke carried on, a chair left in our name, a story that we now tell.

Blessed are you who have learned to make sense of a world that doesn't make sense without them.

And blessed are you with grief present still
who carry the weight of surviving a loved one,
of keeping the memories and sharing the stories.

O God, you alone know the whole of it. You know their sufferings, their joys, their hopes, their winding paths and every movement of their souls.

Restore our souls, even as you receive theirs. welcome them in with the kind of embrace we wish we could give them.

Blessed is the time they were given and the time you now have.
whether in life or in death, love is there.

Song: *This Is Our God*

Reading (Jessi): *Psalm 34:1-10, 22*

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

**My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.**

O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

**I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.**

Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.

**This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,
and was saved from every trouble.**

The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

**O taste and see that the Lord is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.**

**O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.**

The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

**The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.**

Intro to Prayer and Candle Lighting for Specific Loved Ones

As we set aside some time now to dwell on the names and pictures
of those specific people we love and miss
and have entrusted into the Lord's presence,

I invite you to pause with me for a few moments
in order to slow down, to notice the presence of the Holy Spirit,
and in God's gentle presence to bring those loved ones into your mind's eye.
Let's take a few moments and just close our eyes,
breath slowly,
and hear God's invitation to draw near.
As you come into an awareness of God's presence,
or as you're able to imagine the tenderness of God,
then, if you're able, I invite you to mouth or
whisper the name of those you're thinking of and missing tonight.
As you think of them, imagine what it means for them to be healed and whole,
full of joy and delight and utterly at peace
in the presence of our Good Shepherd Jesus.
Imagine even that they in some way are joining us in our worship,
joining us in every word of trust and praise we speak to the Living God.
Let's take a few moments in the quiet as we allow the Holy Spirit
to minister to our hearts in the midst of our remembrance.
If addition names of people you are remembering come to mind,
I invite you to come forward now or at any time throughout the rest of our
time together this evening
and light a candle in their memory.
You can also write their name on a card and set it on the memorial table.

--- *Silence* ---

Prayer and Candle Lighting

Jesus, we thank you for those some of us knew and loved and worshiped
with right here among us at Threads—
Lord Jesus, for Koa, whose presence couldn't be missed; whose welcome
was vigorous and whose legacy of whimsy and wonder lives on among
us., we thank you.

Tender God, for Chloe, who was so tiny and for whom we spend many, many hours in prayer and pleading with you, only to have to say goodbye abruptly, after all - we thank you. We trust you.

Merciful God, for your servant Stacey, who greeted people here so warmly, always dependable for a good chat about the weather, and who we lost in the midst of the Covid shutdowns and so we never got to say goodbye, we thank you.

Eternal God, we also remember together those who are loved and missed by individuals among us.

Though we didn't all know them, Lord,
We are one in You, and we remember them
And celebrate their lives and their eternal life
Together as one family.

So, Lord God, we lift up and remember these names together:

- We remember and cherish together Alice Goodrich's deeply-loved and loving mom and dad Debbie and Duane.
- Jesus, we speak and cherish together in your presence the name of Tato, Courtney and Deryl Garland's little boy who is now with you.
- We remember and thank you for Joel Bell's dad and Suzi's first husband, your faithful servant Tim Klomparens. We thank you for Joel's grandma Klomparens, And for Dan Bell's first wife Trudy.
- We also honor with the Garlands Courtney's grandparents Flo and Bob - thank you for their lives and their witness, and for the reality that they are healed and whole in You.
- Gracious God we thank you tonight for the life of Travis Everitt, Deb Flook's grand-nephew, who went home to be with you just this summer; we thank you for the witness of his life, and the

powerful redemption and healing you worked in his Spirit even as his earthly life was drawing to a close.

- We thank you, Jesus, for the life of Laura and Luke Kujacznski's firstborn Ellie, who went from the womb into your arms; we know that she is alive and that we will have bountiful time together in Your Kingdom.
- Lord God I lift up the name of my Grandma, Joy Flook. She was a character - fierce in her welcoming ways and delightful in her story-telling. Thank you for the confidence that she is with you and that we will meet again.
- Jesus, we remember together all the unborn children many among us have lost, with deep and often lonely grief. Lord God, we believe that even those mysterious tiny lives count, and they are safe and whole now with You.
- leave time for additional names to be added and candles lit; open mic
(Instrumental music)

And there are others, Lord God—those whose names I don't know, but that others are holding in memory and perhaps in grief tonight. You know their names, Lord. You know their faces and their quirks and their personalities, because You are with them. Be with us, too, as we miss them. Make real to us their presence in that great crowd of witnesses with which we are surrounded.

Thank you for the gifts of all these lives.

Thank you that they are experiencing fulness of life in You.

Amen.

Song: *Jesus, Only Jesus*

Reading (Jessi): Hebrews 11:1-12:3

Faith in Action

11 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ²This is what the ancients were commended for.

³By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

⁴By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

⁵By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

⁷By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

⁸By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹²And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

¹³All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of the country they had

left, they would have had opportunity to return.¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,¹⁸ even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

²³ By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

²⁹ By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

³¹ By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.

³² And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, ³³ who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵ Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—³⁸ the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Remarks on the passage - (Rebecca)

This beautiful passage reminds us that not only do we have the ability in Christ to confidently trust that those we have personally loved are safe and alive in God's presence, but we are also reminded that we stand on the shoulders of our ancestors in the faith, some of whom we've heard of, and millions of others who have lived faithful lives in obscurity, humbly following Jesus,

serving others,
pursuing justice,
paving the way for those who would come after.

It is good to remember that God's kindness to us includes
not only the gift of the time we had with the loved ones, the saints in our own
lives that we miss,
but also that God has prepared the world for us
through the work and witness of countless saints we don't even know about,
all over the world and all throughout history.

We are sustained and held by the love of God.
That love comes to us through other people,
some of whom we remember tonight.
God's love comes to us through the prayer and witness
of the saints down through the ages, whether we are always aware of it or not.
And God's love comes to us through the Holy Spirit
renewing in our hearts the hope of the resurrection.

In 1 Corinthians 13:5 Paul writes,

For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know
in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.

I want to read a poem that sums this all up
in words that come closer than I can
to doing justice to the beauty of our hope:

All Saints -Malcolm Guite

Though Satan breaks our dark glass into shards
Each shard still shines with Christ's reflected light,
It glances from the eyes, kindles the words
Of all his unknown saints. The dark is bright
With quiet lives and steady lights undimmed,

The witness of the ones we shunned and shamed.
Plain in our sight and far beyond our seeing
He weaves them with us in the web of being
They stand beside us even as we grieve,
The lone and left behind whom no one claimed,
Unnumbered multitudes, he lifts above
The shadow of the gibbet and the grave,
To triumph where all saints are known and named;
The gathered glories of His wounded love.

Communion

To you we come, Father of lights,
with angels and saints,
where heaven and earth unite.
May Jesus meet us in the breaking of the bread.
Amen.

Communion Song: *Hymn of Heaven*

Ending Prayer (*Rebecca*)

Sending

May Christ who makes saints of sinners,
who has transformed those we remember today,
raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world;
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and remain with you always.