

Order of Service for November 1, 2020 - All Saints Sunday

GATHERING

Gathering Song - 424, Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones

Ye watchers and ye holy ones, Bright seraphs, cherubim, and thrones,
Raise the glad strain, Alleluia!
Cry out, dominions, principedoms, powers, Virtues, archangels, angels' choirs:

Refrain

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

O higher than the cherubim, More glorious than the seraphim,
Lead their praises, Alleluia!

Thou bearer of th' eternal Word, Most gracious, magnify the Lord: *Refrain*

Respond, ye souls in endless rest, Ye patriarchs and prophets blest,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Ye holy twelve, ye martyrs strong, All saints triumphant, raise the song: *Refrain*

O friends, in gladness let us sing, Supernal anthems echoing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

To God the Father, God the Son, And God the Spirit, Three in One: *Refrain*

(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)

Kyrie

P - Holy Creator, you call us to be holy by calling us to be yours. Lord, have mercy.

C -Lord, have mercy.

P - Holy Saviour, you call us to follow you with lives made holy by your love. Christ, have mercy.

C -Christ, have mercy.

P - Holy Guide, you breathe holiness into every day, every hour, every minute. Lord, have mercy.

C -Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Day

The Lord is with us. Let us pray.

Almighty God, you have knit your people together in one communion in the mystical body of 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 Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

Christian Scriptures 1st John 3

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.
The word of the Lord.

Sermon

I arrived in Nova Scotia in August of 2014 to begin working with you. I came a bit earlier than my official start date, which was September 1st, so I could move in, get settled, and all that.

As it happened, August 31st was a Sunday, so I came to worship with you that day. Pastor Willis Ott was leading the service that day; it was his last Sunday with you as your Interim Pastor. And I remember that during the sermon, Pastor Willis asked you to share your favourite Bible verses. Pastor Jim Dauphinee was attending Zion on that day, and I remember him calling out, in his deep, resonant “Pastor’s voice,” “John 3:16, God so love the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.”

A few others offered passages. I think the 23rd Psalm was mentioned, and maybe a few others.

1st John chapter 3, verse 2, which was just read a minute ago, was not mentioned. It *could* have been. Maybe even *should* have been. I think these words belong at, or at least *near*, the top of the list of the most grace-filled, welcoming, ultimate-summation-of-Good-News verses in the Bible.

Beloved, we are God's children now.

These few words provide a wonderful encapsulation of the gospel. They describe our reality, our relationship with God. It’s a magnificent statement of what *is*.

There is no hint of “You should” in this verse. There’s no suggestion of “Unless you do the right thing or believe the right way....” There’s no threat, there are no conditions, there’s no trace of waiting for the future when everything will be made better. There is only a proclamation of our standing in the world today. We are “*beloved*,” we are “*God’s children*,” and we are these things “*now*.”

I love the fact that this is so “present tense.” No waiting, no working to get it, no earning or deserving it. It’s already given. It’s already there. It already *here*.

The saints that we remember here today, especially those who have died in the last year, are a wonderfully diverse group of folks, who, in some ways, have almost nothing in common! Some were loud and boisterous, some were quiet and reserved. Some were very successful in things that they did, some barely got by. Some had wonderful relationships with family members, some were, quite frankly, a bit more difficult. They faced different challenges, their lives went in different directions, they had dramatically different priorities. We can’t even claim that they all *believed* the same thing! They are an amazingly mixed bag of people that we remember today.

If there *is* a thread that binds them together, I think it is the thread that 1st John chapter 3 verse 2 points to: *Beloved, we are God's children now*. They were, and are, beloved. They were, and are, God’s children. That was the case every moment of their lives, and has not stopped being the case now.

And that's really what we remember today. We don't remember how perfect they were, which I'm sure **they** would say is a good thing! We remember that it is God's **love** which made them saints, which made them windows through which we could catch a glimpse of the Good News promise that we, **too**, are beloved, that we, **too**, are God's children, and that that is the case with us, **now**, as well.

There is, of course, a challenge with this glorious truth. And that challenge is coming to grips with how widely it is cast.

Sometimes, for some of us, the challenge is believing that the promise does actually apply to us! We keep listening to the doubts; we keep remembering things we've done that were not helpful; we keep regretting things we could have done but didn't; we keep taking ownership of the comments made all those years ago when someone said something about us, even if it wasn't true. No matter how many times the promise of God is proclaimed to us, we insist on throwing barriers up.

If this is you, or if you are having that kind of day, here's God's message for you today: *Beloved, you are God's child now*. You are free from all those doubts, all those mistakes, all those neglected opportunities. You are free from all that history, and all that worry, and all that pain.

And here's some even **better** news! God doesn't mind repeating this message, over and over again. No matter how often we throw those walls in the way, God keeps coming back. And back. And back again, saying, *Beloved, you are God's child now*.

And sometimes, for some of us, the challenge is believing that the promise applies to others. It's so easy to remember other people's past actions and decisions, to cling to their inappropriate comments or behaviour, to hold on to the wrongs that "they" committed. And there are times when it's delicious "fun" to refuse to let go of slights, or insisting that there were malicious motives behind behaviour, and demanding that those things be remembered. "They must be **paid for!**" And in today's political environment, it doesn't even matter if what we're mad about is true! What matters is hanging on to that righteous anger, that sense of superiority, that arrogant pride of being "right" when other people are so obviously "wrong."

If this is you, or if you are having that kind of day, here's God's message for **you** today: *Beloved, you are God's child now*. You are free from all those attempts to prove your own standing, or establish your own identity at someone else's expense. You are free from needing to put others down, or make judgements about their motives. You are free to let go of the pain you have suffered, because that does not define who you are any more.

And here's some even **better** news! God doesn't mind repeating this message, over and over again. No matter how often we fall back into those old, destructive patterns, God keeps coming back. And back. And back again, saying, *Beloved, you are God's child now*.

1st John chapter 3 verse 2 doesn't usually make the list of the top 10 favourite Bible verses. But it could. And maybe should.

But even if it never does, it is still one of the best, grace-filled, ultimately welcoming summations of the Good News that we have in the Bible. It is a gift that we have been given. It is a gift that those wonderfully varied saints, who we remember today, were given. And, it is a gift which we are invited to share. Again, and again, and again, just as often as God shares it with us. It applies to us; it applies to them.

*Beloved, we **are** God's children now.*

Thanks be to God. Amen.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Hymn of the Day - 427, For All Your Saints, O Lord

For all your saints, O Lord, who strove in you to live,
who followed you, obeyed, adored, our grateful hymn receive.

For all your saints, O Lord, who strove in you to die,
who counted you their great reward, accept our thankful cry.

They all in life and death, with you, their Lord, in view,
learned from your Holy Spirit's breath to suffer and to do.

For this, your name we bless and humbly pray anew
that we like them in holiness may live and die in you.

To God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, ever blest,
the One in Three, the Three in One, be endless praise addressed.

(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)

Please remember to support our ministry with your Offerings.

Prayers of the People

We offer our prayers to God, trusting that we will be heard, as God's people have *always* been heard.

[Short pause]

Holy God of holy ones, we offer heartfelt thanks for the promise which makes us yours.

God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

Holy God of holy ones, no matter how many times we put barriers in your path, you continue to come to us, continue to love us, continue to forgive us. Open us to your gracious presence. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

Holy God of holy ones, we remember those who have died in the last year, who now rest from their labours:

GRACE - Glen Conrad, Bentley Lillis, Carl Tanner, Doris Zinck.

ZION - Marjorie Aulenbach, Leo Crouse, Elvin Falkenham, Phyllis McLeod, Eddie Mosher, Carolyn Silver.

For their lives, we give thanks. For their faith and example, we give praise. For your presence with us as you were with them, we express our deep, deep gratitude. God who is with us,

C - Hear our prayer.

Holy God of holy ones, fill your people with gratitude for all your gifts, and then open our eyes to the gifts you give to others. Free us from jealousy and fear, that we may celebrate your presence in all the world. God who is with us,
C - Hear our prayer.

Holy God of holy ones, we offer our prayers for your church around the world, especially in places in which life is difficult, which are facing challenges, changes or disasters. Inspire your people to love extravagantly, serve the least, welcome the stranger, and recognize the other as beloved. God who is with us,
C - Hear our prayer.

Holy God of holy ones, you accompany us through promise and presence, through Good News and holy people. Keep us hopeful; keep us faithful; keep us joyful God who is with us,
C - Hear our prayer.

Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
C - Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P - And now we pray as Jesus continues to teach us:

C - Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

SENDING

Benediction

P - May almighty God,
The Father who created you to live in love,
The Son (†) who died and rose to bring you new life,
And the Spirit who brings life into and through you,
bless you all, now and forever.

C - Amen.

Sending Song - 423, Shall We Gather at the River

Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod,
with its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God?

Refrain

Yes, we'll gather at the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God.

On the margin of the river, washing up its silver spray,
we will walk and worship ever, all the happy golden day. *Refrain*

Ere we reach the shining river, lay we ev'ry burden down;
grace our spirits will deliver, and provide a robe and crown. *Refrain*

Soon we'll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease;
soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace. *Refrain*

(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)

Dismissal

P - Go in peace. We are God's children now.

C - Thanks be to God!

Remember to visit our Facebook page and our Website, <https://zionlutheranlunenburg.ca>