



All Saints Day (Year A)

All Saints Day

Focus Scripture
Matthew 5:1–12

Additional Scriptures
Revelation 7:9–17
Psalm 34:1–10, 22
1 John 3:1–3

Eternal God, you know our yesterdays, our todays, and our tomorrows. Thank you for working in the lives of all your saints. Give us faith to engage the world according to your ways, living in hope and confidence of your saving love. Amen.

What is it like to live as God’s saint? This week’s readings affirm that all who claim and trust in the promises of God are blessed. God’s saints today – including all who are baptized into Christ – are called to look ahead, to know the hope to which God calls. And God’s saints are called to live now in the presence of God’s promises, working toward their fulfillment.

Focus Scripture: Matthew 5:1–12

This passage begins the first of Jesus’ five major sections of teaching in Matthew. Matthew 5 is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, which might be thought of as Jesus’ vision of life in God’s reign. The Sermon on the Mount concludes with Matthew 7:28. The setting is on a mountain, where Jesus is seated and teaching the disciples. Noting Matthew 7:28, however, one can imagine the crowds mentioned in verse 1 craning their necks to overhear Jesus’ words.

In Matthew, the gospel writer sets up comparisons between Jesus and Moses. Moses encountered God on a mountain and received God’s Law to give to the Hebrew people. In these verses, Jesus speaks from the mountain to teach about God’s reign.

Verses 3–12 are called “The Beatitudes,” pronouncements of blessings. What Jesus says about those who are blessed by God likely surprised and shocked those who heard it. Jesus teaches that God’s blessings come to those who are ignored by society, those who are viewed as outcasts, and those who are willing to work for what God values. Verses 3–6 speak of the relationship between believers and God; verses 7–12 speak of the relationship between believers and the world.

Jesus teaches that poverty of spirit, meekness, longing for God’s righteousness, showing mercy, relying on God, and working for peace may come into the lives of believers. Jesus speaks a word of promise into such situations: the favour of God’s reign means comfort, inheritance, fulfillment, mercy, and eternal relationship with God. The Beatitudes close with Jesus’ encouragement to his followers to rejoice. Others may verbally or physically abuse and persecute them for living lives of faithful service to God and neighbour, but God has the ultimate power.

Jesus’ words call us and all the saints to gaze forward to the time when God’s promises will be fulfilled. Those who weep now will laugh. Those who are hungry now will be filled. Those who are poor now will receive the riches of God’s inheritance. With this future firmly in our gaze, the obstacles to faith become smaller, the path easier to navigate.

The writer of **1 John 3:1–3** proclaims that it is God’s love that makes one a child of God, and calls on the readers of this letter – then and now – to claim this identity with hope and faith.

Written to encourage Christians facing persecution in the Roman Empire late in the first century CE, the book of Revelation is a vision of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s reign. **Revelation 7:9–17** is the writer’s vision of multitudes from every nation – including those who have suffered in their faith – coming to live in God’s reign. God’s gift of salvation to all peoples is received by God’s people with endless, wondrous worship.

Psalm 34:1–10, 22 is part of a wisdom teaching about God’s goodness. There is no direct address to God, rather the psalmist calls for all to “taste and see” that God is good. God delivers; God saves; God redeems the lives of God’s faithful saints.



All Saints Day is a time to remember the saints who have gone before us and to give thanks for the blessings God has given us to share with others. When we faithfully place ourselves in God’s presence, new possibilities for life and service become visible. We have a role to play, along with the saints of old, in the story of God’s saving work. What might we do, as individuals and as the church, to welcome all people to live in God’s promise?



Prepare

NOTE: All of these suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete and add according to your local needs.

- ❑ Recruit *volunteers* for worship: musicians to help lead the call to worship, two for the Matthew and 1 John readings.
- ❑ Bring a *table, coloured construction paper, scissors, markers, and tape* for gather.
- ❑ Select a *Seasons of the Spirit poster that exudes a sense of joy and celebration*. Mount it on a large piece of *foam board or poster board*.
- ❑ Bring a *feather* for “Opening the word with children.”
- ❑ Prepare the *slide show* as described in Respond.

Gather

Cover a small table with a green cloth near the entrance to the worship space. Provide blue, green, red, and yellow construction paper, scissors, and tape. Display a *Seasons of the Spirit* poster that exudes a sense of joy and celebration. Invite people to trace their hands, write their names on them, cut them out, and tape them around the poster before entering the worship space.

Call to worship

(Bring the mounted poster into the worship space as you sing a gathering song.)

See what great love has been given to us,
that we should be called children of God.

Come, let us be in the presence of this sacred love.

Opening prayer

In all our weakness and strength,
with our youth-filled spirits and aging bodies,
we come to be your people, O God.

Strong in faith and eager with questions,
singing our praise and whispering our prayers,
we come to be your people, O God.

Filled with saintly determination
yet mindful of our human limitations,
we come to be your people, O God.

Made strong in your endless love for us,
we know ourselves to be yours and
we come to be your people, O God.

May we truly become your people today. Amen.

Prayer of confession

(inspired by 1 John 3:1–3)

Beloved, we are God’s children now,
but what we will be in the fullness of our time
has not been revealed.

What we do know is this:
we will be like Jesus the Christ and saints of God.
Let us consider how Jesus was revealed among us
and pray to be more like the Christ in every way.

(Offer the reflections below or use some of your own. Follow each statement with a moment of silence.)

Jesus embodied the unconditional love of God...

We pray, **may we be more like Jesus.**

Jesus fed those who were hungry...

We pray, **may we be more like Jesus.**

Jesus drew near to those living on the margins and
excluded...

We pray, **may we be more like Jesus.**

Jesus brought healing and wholeness to those in
need...

We pray, **may we be more like Jesus.**

Jesus hungered and thirsted for righteousness...

We pray, **may we be more like Jesus.**

Assurance of pardon

Beloved, through the love shown to us by Jesus,
we can be sure that we are God’s children now.
The Spirit of Christ is among us in this gathering
and the nature of Christ is revealed within us.
We are becoming more and more like Christ each day.
Therefore, let us live joyfully as God’s people;
saints and instruments of God’s way.

Engage

Scripture readings

 **Matthew 5:1–12 and 1 John 3:1–3**

Read 1 John 3:1–2a from the pulpit or lectern and then pause. Have a second reader enter and sit on a stool at the front of the worship space. This person

reads aloud Matthew 5:3–12 and then exits the worship space. Continue reading 1 John 3:2b–3. Consider adapting the language of 1 John to make the subject of the pronouns more obvious, especially given the break in the reading.



Revised Common Lectionary (Yr A)

Revelation 7:9–17
Psalm 34:1–10, 22
1 John 3:1–3
Matthew 5:1–12

Liturgical colour:
white

Music Suggestions

Come, Let Us Seek Our God’s Protection
Tom Colvin; Seasons Songbook, vol. 6

Roll Over the Ocean
Traditional; Seasons Songbook, vol. 6

As We Go Now
Stephen Fischbacher; Seasons Songbook, vol. 6

You Are Salt for the Earth, O People
Marty Haugen

To Know You More
Joe Horness

Together We Serve
Daniel Charles Damon

For All the Saints
Ralph Vaughn Williams

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God
Lesbia Scott





Opening the word with children

Art exploration

Gather around the mounted poster with the handprints around it. Say that today the church is celebrating All Saints Day. Explain that sometimes people use the word “saint” to talk about someone who behaves in a special way. For example, we sometimes call someone a saint if they usually follow rules and don’t misbehave. Or sometimes we call someone a saint when they do something amazing to help others. But today we remember that God sees each one of us as a saint and a special child of God. Turn to the poster and remind the children that everyone was invited to tape a cutout of her or his hand around the poster. Point to one of the handprints and announce, “Here is a saint of God!” Point to another handprint and do the same. Do this a few more times and celebrate the saints who make up your community.

Blessed by God

(based on Matthew 5:1–12)

Invite the wonder of storytelling into worship by using this adaptation of Matthew 5:1–12 for the gospel reading. Whenever the feather symbol is shown in the story, hold the feather high in the air and let it go. Encourage everyone to say, “God blesses you.” When the feather lands on the floor, everyone says in an emphatic voice, “Yes!”

“Come, sit down, my friends. I have something important to say to you. I want you to be my disciples.” Jesus looked around. Many of his friends were with him. This would be a good time to sit on the hillside and talk together. This would be a good time to tell his friends what it means to be a disciple.

“Friends, when you see someone hungry, know that God blesses them. God doesn’t want anyone to be hungry. Share your food with others.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, when you see someone sad, know that God blesses them. God wants to help their sadness go away. Please help others who are feeling sad.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, when you see someone who wants to know more about God, know that God blesses them. God wants to help everyone know more about God’s way. Be kind and loving, share your food and toys, and people will know what God is like.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, when you see someone who is kind to others, know that God blesses them. God wants kindness to come to them, too. Care about other people. God cares about you very much.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, when you see someone who is gentle and who doesn’t hurt others, know that God blesses them. They will always be part of God’s family. Tell others that God loves them.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, when you see someone who tells the truth and is honest with God, know that God blesses them. God loves them and will always be with them. Tell others that we can always trust God.

God blesses you...

Yes!

“Friends, you are all God’s children. Listen to God. Listen to each other.”

God blesses you...

Yes!

Jesus looked around at all his friends again. “You are my disciples,” Jesus said. “I love you and I want you to be happy. You are a blessing to others when you live God’s way.”

God blesses you...

Yes! Yes! Yes!

Proclaiming the Word

Spend some time with the *Seasons of the Spirit* poster you have selected that exudes a sense of joy and celebration. Imagine yourself dancing in the centre of the image. Who is dancing beside you in life? If you were to strike a pose that represents your spiritual life right now, what would it look like?

Words of blessing are given by Jesus in **Matthew 5:1–12**. How do you see your community of faith receiving these words from Jesus? In what ways is your community a reflection of the blessed community? In what ways do you need to grow?



1 **John 3:1–3** offers another picture of the saints of God. How has Jesus been revealed to you in the gospels and through the ongoing work of the Spirit? How would

you like to be more Christlike? How does it feel to be called a child of God?



Respond

Remembering the saints

Collect a photograph of each person from the congregation who died during the past year. Create a slide show with the photographs using your church's projection program. Type a verse from a psalm or other reading that was used during her or his memorial service next to the each person's photo. As each slide is projected, state the name of the person and read the verse. Have someone add a handprint to the frame around the mounted poster. Play instrumental music in the background.

Prayers of the people

We notice the saints around us, O God;
They have time for their friends and their family members.

We want to be like them. *(silence)*

We notice the saints around us, O God;
They see a neighbour in need, and they are ready to meet that need.

We want to be like them. *(silence)*

We notice the saints around us, O God;
They are aware of an injustice in the local community, or beyond this nation, and they find a way to bring change.

We want to be like them. *(silence)*

We notice the saints around us, O God; they have a strong faith, and are ready to nourish their faith in Christian community.

We want to be like them. *(silence)*

(From Prayers to Share: Responsive Prayers for each Sunday of the Church Year by David Sparks. Copyright © 2004 Wood Lake Publishing.)

Offertory prayer

Faithful God, you ask us to be faithful people.
In this community, you ask us to be people of justice.
In this community, you ask us to be people of mercy.
In this community, you ask us to be people of peace.
Be with us as we try to be faithful
in large ways and in small ways
so your eternal community may come in every way.

Bless

Based on Revelation 7:12, 16–17

Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honour and power
and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!

We go out to be God's people.

Go in strength to be the saints of God
for you will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike you, nor any scorching heat.

We go out to be God's people.

Live the way of God with confidence
for God is your shepherd,
and will guide you to the spring of life.

We go out to be God's people.

Special Days Commentary

November 1 – All Saints Day

In many churches, All Saints Day celebrates all people of faith, recalling how, in New Testament usage, the word *saints* refers to Christians collectively, as well as those people of special significance who have been set apart by the church or canonized. It is the recognition of the common bond of Christians, both living and dead, and the common bond of the church here on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. If November 1 falls on a weekday, All Saints Day is generally observed on the following Sunday.

November 2 – All Souls Day

For those traditions who use All Saints Day to commemorate canonized saints, or those whose lives have been particularly Christlike, All Souls Day on November 2 provides an opportunity to remember other Christians who have died. A simple, reflective service can provide an opportunity to invite those who have been bereaved during the year to gather to remember their loved ones in prayer.

