

Worship Service

BY ERIC L. MATHIS

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP ON THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

Meditation

[The worthy Christian mentors] we rightly revere are “God’s saints” in the sense that God creates them by grace. Men and women do not by sheer determination and self-discipline become saints. Sanctity is a divine gift. It is indeed the power of the resurrection at work in human lives. Thus commemorating the saints is nothing other than a way of affirming that the transformative power of Christ is at work all about us in human lives. ...

We are saints because God’s sanctity is at work in us, not because on our own we have come to great spiritual attainment. In exploring the lives of the historic saints, it is necessary to be thoroughly honest about their limitations and faults, for only in this way do we come to believe that God can also work in the people around us and even in us, whose faults we know fully well.

Lawrence Hull Stookey¹

Prelude



AT THE INTERSECTION OF TIME AND ETERNITY: PRAISING THE GOD OF LIFE AND DEATH

Call to Worship: 1 Corinthians 15:51-56

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. **For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.**

For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Invocation

Eternal God, neither death nor life can separate us from your love. Grant that we may serve you faithfully here on earth, and rejoice with all your saints who proclaim your glory with unending praise. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise

"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:

"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:

"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

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:

"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

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:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

John Athelstan Laurie Riley (1858-1945)

Tune: LASST UNS ERFREUEN



**WHAT WAS AND IS TO COME:
REMEMBERING THE PAST AND ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE**

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, in every age you have raised up men and women
 who have lived and died in faith.
 On this day, we are burdened by our indifference to you and to your will.
 You have called us to speak, but we have remained silent.
 You have called us to act with justice, but we have remained timid.
 You have called us to acknowledge our limitations,
 but we have remained full of pride.
 Keep before us your faithful servants
 who have lived lives of courage, love, hope, and humility.
 Teach us to follow their example,
 so that we, too, may inherit the kingdom promised in Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Ephesians 2:19-22

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the
 saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the
 foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as
 the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and
 grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built
 together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Hymn of Comfort

“Come, Ye Disconsolate”

Come, ye disconsolate, wherever ye languish;
 come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel;
 here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish:
 earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
 hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure,
 here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
 “Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure.”

Here see the Bread of Life; see waters flowing
 forth from the throne of God, pure from above;
 come to the feast of love; come, ever knowing
 earth has no sorrow but heaven can remove.

Thomas Moore (1816), vv. 1-2; Thomas Hastings (1832), v. 3
Tune: CONSOLATION (Webbe)

The First Reading: Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace.
For though in the sight of others they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.
Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.
In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.
They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them forever.
Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Life and Death

"When Life Well Lived Is at an End" (vv. 1-2)

When life well lived is at an end and human powers cease,
the God who gave us life and breath will be our rest and peace.
If we believe that Jesus died and that he rose again,
we know that we shall also rise a new life to begin.

As men and women of the past bore witness to the Light,
they passed from life into a world of comfort and delight.
Their faithfulness in life and death declares unto our day
that we, like them, may have a faith that will not pass away.

David W. Music (2013)
Tune: KINGSFOLD

The Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-7

Then I 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. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And 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;
he 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.”

And 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.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn of Life and Death

“When Life Well Lived Is at an End” (vv. 3-4)

So let us live, that when the hour of death for us is here,
we go in trust to meet our God without regret or fear,
as people of a living faith, by faith to God restored;
and in the future we shall be forever with the Lord.

All glory to the Father be, all glory to the Son,
and to the Spirit, one in three, and also three in one;
through seasons of eternity that are and that have been,
and in the ages yet to come, world without end. Amen.

David W. Music (2013)

Tune: KINGSFOLD



**WHAT IS:
LIVING IN THE PRESENT**

The Gospel Reading: Luke 6:20-31

Then Jesus looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.
Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

The Gospel of the Savior.
Praise to You, Lord Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of Response

“By All Your Saints Still Striving”

By all your saints still striving, for all your saints at rest,
 your holy name, O Jesus, forevermore be blessed!
 For you arose victorious that they might wear the crown
 and share the light of glory reflected from your throne.

For Luke, beloved physician, all praise, whose Gospel shows
 the healer of the nations, the one who shares our woes.
 Your wine and oil, O Savior, upon our spirits pour,
 and with true balm of Gilead anoint us evermore.

Apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all the noble throng
 who wear the spotless raiment and raise the ceaseless song –
 for these passed on before us, we sing our praise anew
 and, walking in their footsteps would live our lives for you.

Horatio Bolton Nelson (1864), alt.

Tune: NYLAND

Prayers of the People²

I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,
 from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,
 standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white,
 with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice,
 saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne,
 and to the Lamb!”

Let us give thanks for all those who have lived and died in the faith.
(Congregants may speak names aloud or a prepared list may be read.)

Gracious God, we give thanks for these lives that intersected with
 ours, and we thank you for using them to point others to you. We
 are especially grateful for the great cloud of witnesses which now
 surrounds your throne:

for apostles and early believers,
 for those from the early church,
 for martyrs of all ages,
 for those who have reformed the Church in every age,
 for those who have ministered to us.

As we join in the communion of saints, may we follow their example
 and be counted worthy of wearing your name:

in our care of creation,
 in our work with people of other nations and ethnicities,

in our respect for those in authority,
in our attention to those in our community,
in our solidarity with Christians around the world,
in our daily lives of ministry.

God, as we live our lives in the present, fill our hearts with anticipation for the day when we, too, will join our voices with those around your throne to praise the one eternal God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Offering

A musical setting of *Te Deum Laudamus* (4th Century, Latin) is appropriate.

We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.
All the earth doth worship thee: the Father everlasting.
To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens, and all the powers therein.
To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry:
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.

The glorious company of the apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee,
the Father, of an infinite majesty,
thine honorable, true, and only Son,
also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man,
thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,
thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.
Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants
whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.
Make them to be numbered with thy saints, in glory everlasting.

O Lord, save thy people, and bless thine heritage.
Govern them, and lift them up forever.
Day by day we magnify thee;
and we worship thy name, ever world without end.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.

*Doxology*³

“As Saints of Old”

As saints of old their first-fruits brought of orchard, flock, and field
to God, the giver of all good, the source of bounteous yield,
so we today first-fruits would bring, the wealth of this good land,
of farm and market, shop and home, of mind and heart and hand.

A world in need now summons us to labor, love, and give;
to make our life an offering to God, that all may live.
The church of Christ is calling us to make the dream come true:
a world redeemed by Christ-like love; all life in Christ made new.

In gratitude and humble trust we bring our best today
to serve your cause and share your love with all along life’s way.
O God, who gave yourself to us in Jesus Christ your Son,
teach us to give ourselves each day until life’s work is done.

Frank von Christierson (1900-1996), alt.

Tune: FOREST GREEN

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Spoken Benediction

And now, may God the Father,
 who remains faithful in life and death,
God’s Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
 whose own death and resurrection give us the promise of new life,
and the power of the Holy Spirit,
 whose daily presence transforms our world,
empower your journey towards sanctity
 and fill you with the hope of resurrection and new life. **Amen.**

Sung Benediction

“For All the Saints” (vv. 1-4, 7, 8)

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Oh, blest communion, fellowship divine,
we feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

But then there breaks a yet more glorious day:
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;
the King of glory passes on his way.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

William W. How (1864), alt.
Tune: SINE NOMINE

Dismissal

Let us go forth and live in the hope of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

NOTES

1 Lawrence Hull Stookey, *Calendar: Christ's Time for the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 141-142.

2 Portions of this prayer are based on 1 Corinthians 2:9, Hebrews 12:1-2, and Revelation 7:9-10.

3 One or all stanzas may be sung as the offerings are presented.



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