

# twelvebaskets



## ALL SAINTS DAY C

A complete Sunday service ready to use  
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

**All Saints Day - Year C**  
30th October 2022



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing OR**

**293 STF – All heaven declares**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**46 STF – Everlasting God OR**

**778 STF – Praise the Lord, all you nations**

Readings: Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

**Hymn:**

**113 STF – O worship the King, all-glorious above OR**

**746 STF – For all the saints who showed your love**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR**

**255 STF – The kingdom of God**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**53 STF – How shall I sing that majesty? OR**

**745 STF – For all the saints who from their labours rest**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

**Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).**

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## **Call to worship**

God, we gather here today to worship you, to seek your voice, and to be inspired, encouraged and challenged to go out into the world full of your presence, as your hands and feet.

Come Holy Spirit, and fill us afresh.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing OR

293 STF – All heaven declares

## **Opening Prayers**

A prayer of adoration

Glorious Father, Lord of all,  
we lift your name on high.  
You reveal the blessings  
of life in your kingdom,  
giving us knowledge  
of love and mercy;  
drawing us closer  
into your presence;  
healing our brokenness;  
tending our souls;  
opening our lives to  
your love and grace.

Glorious Father, Lord of all,  
we lift your name on high.

Amen.

## **A prayer of thanksgiving**

The blessed in your eyes  
are not those who have everything  
but those who consider  
that without you  
they have nothing.

Not the rich in earning,  
but the rich in spending,  
who give their lives for you.

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<sup>1</sup> Call to Worship written by Abi Jarvis

Your ordinary saints,  
being your hands  
and speaking your words  
in their ordinary lives,  
doing extraordinary things  
with all that you have given them.

The blessed in your eyes  
are not those who desire honour,  
but those who seek to serve.

Thank you for the servants in your kingdom.

Amen.

### **A prayer of confession**

Who are the poor  
but those who know they have nothing  
without you?

Who are the hungry  
but those who know their sustenance comes  
only from you?

Who are the sorrowful  
but those who weep for the many  
who don't know you?

Give us your heart  
for those who are seeking;  
give us your heart  
for those who are suffering;  
give us your heart  
for those in this world  
who, though they have nothing,  
have all that they need  
if they will but reach out for you. <sup>2</sup>

*[Pause]*

God of all grace, we come to you carrying many failings and much guilt, but even as we bring our confessions to you, we hear your words to us: 'your sins are forgiven'.

Equip us, as we worship and as we live, to do so as a people unbridled from self-doubt and liberated to live and love in your Spirit,

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from The Act of Prayer by John Birch

<sup>3</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

### All Age Talk

Close your eyes – picture your town / city / country. Picture your house, your school – all your favourite places. Now imagine that Jesus was the Prime Minister and the King. What rules or laws do you think Jesus would have? *[take suggestions – you could prompt them by asking how Jesus' rules might help people who are hungry, poor or sad, or whether Jesus would be more interested in punishment or forgiveness]*

Most of the time we think of rules as being good things. They keep us safe, and they punish people who have done things they shouldn't. But sometimes rules aren't good. Sometimes rules help some people, but they make things worse for other people.

Do you think if Jesus was in charge, he would want rules that make people happy or sad? Why do you think that? *[take answers]*

Do you think his rules would make people scared or brave? Why do you think that? *[take answers]*

Sometimes we have to argue that a rule is wrong. Even if it makes our life better, we have to say that it's wrong, because it's hurting someone else. Or we might need to suggest a rule that makes someone else's life better, even if it makes it a bit harder for us.

Can you think of any rules or laws you would like to change, because it's not fair to someone else? Are there any rules you would like to create? *[take suggestions – you could prompt them by asking about the environment, or money, or their school, or people on the other side of the world]*

What do you think we could do to help make sure that our rules make people happy and brave, and not sad or scared? What could you do this week?

*[Invite people to talk about that with the people they are sitting next to for a few minutes, and then draw people back together to pray this prayer].*

God of all grace, thank you for all the wisdom and guidance we receive from you, from the Bible and from people who have studied your word and your ways, who help to shape how we behave and how we treat each other.

Help us to continue to learn from you and be changed by you, so that we can be people of justice, fairness, love and hope in your world today.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

### Hymn:

46 STF – Everlasting God OR

778 STF – Praise the Lord, all you nations

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<sup>4</sup> All Age Talk written by Abi Jarvis

**Readings:** Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6:20-31

**Hymn:**

113 STF – O worship the King, all-glorious above OR

746 STF – For all the saints who showed your love

**Reflections on the reading**

Are there particular parts of the Bible you avoid because they are difficult to understand? Or because they seem to accept things that are (to put it mildly) morally problematic for us? You might have just heard two of them, with Daniel's dream of four great beasts (which sounds more like a nightmare to me!) and Psalm 149's prayer that God's people have praise in their throats and a sword of vengeance in their hands. I doubt you would find any mission organisation, evangelism training college or discipleship programme that would advocate this approach today.

Daniel's apocalyptic vision (which is hard to understand even with the interpretation provided in the Bible) follows on from his famous encounter with the lion's den. Daniels' fellow court officials tricked the king into sentencing Daniel to death, but God protected Daniel. Instead, the court officials who accused him died, along with their families. This perhaps seems more like the vengeance of the Psalm than the justice we might expect today. The human legal system of the Medes and Persians was inflexible and not only allowed Daniel's attempted murder, but also resulted in the unjust deaths of the innocent families of his accusers.

In contrast, Daniel's vision shows a glimpse of what justice might look like in God's kingdom. Here, justice belongs to God, and not imperfect humans. It is overseen by Jesus, who is without sin. So his justice also is without sin. So Daniel gives us an imperfect human justice system contrasted with a perfect heavenly one, under God's rule.

This theme of divine rule is reflected in the passages from Ephesians and Luke. In Ephesians, Paul encourages the early church that Christ is seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come". No one, and no institution, is more powerful than Jesus. He rules over an upside down kingdom; one where it is the poor, hungry and depressed who will receive all that they need.

This message is an inspiring image of a world where there is no poverty or injustice, where all the sins of abuse of power no longer exist. It may be of great comfort for some people, to know that Jesus values people in a different way to the world. But other people will ask (with some right) why this image should matter to people who are suffering today. There are people who are hungry, and poor, and lonely, and suffering in so many other ways. Does God just leave them to suffer now with a vague idea that once they die everything will be better?

I don't think so. I think God is active in the world, challenging injustices and comforting people in grief. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God's kingdom and will

would be done “on earth, as it is in heaven”. How does this happen? Sometimes through miracles. But more often through you and me – ordinary people who want this image of God’s kingdom to break through into the world.

Today is All Saints Day. It is an opportunity to remember those who have journeyed before us, and who we look to for guidance. Have you ever said to someone “Oh, you’re a saint!” Close your eyes and think of that person now. What did you mean? Why did you think they were a saint? *[pause while they reflect. You may wish to ask people to respond with their thoughts]*

Often, when we think of saints, there is a sense of servant heartedness and goodness – someone who goes above and beyond to help other people. On the other hand, the word can be used a little mockingly; a way to insult someone who is considered overly moralistic, or self-suffering, or self-righteous. We might say “they think they’re such a saint!” – meaning that they want to be seen as a good person (perfect, even) but it’s all on the surface. Or perhaps we say it jealously, seeing something in them that we wish we lived up to, but don’t think we do.

Traditionally, the word ‘saint’ brought to mind a figure of particular holiness, someone who performed a miracle, and often was martyred for their faith. In her beautiful song “When the saints”, Sara Groves writes of her desire to be counted one of the saints alongside Biblical figures like Paul, Silas, and Moses. But, inspired by the work of International Justice Mission, and the example of Harriet Tubman, she also refers to those who worked to rescue those trapped in slavery, both during the US Civil War, and across the world today. She wants to be “one of them” – not because she wishes to be honoured, or because sainthood is a position to aspire to, but because she wants to stand alongside them in their commitment to justice, to following Jesus, and to acting in love and justice just as he would.

Rev Dr Babu Immanuel Venkataraman, a Methodist and associate professor of New Testament at the Theological Centre for Asia College, notes about this passage in Luke (referred to as the Beatitudes) that “for Jesus, love is not a sentiment. It means responding positively and lovingly when you are struck and abused and stolen from”. If we are to love as Jesus loved, it must be shown in our actions as well as our emotions. If someone steals from us because they are in need, do not demand your goods are returned, but give them more should they need it. This is not intended to encourage submission to injustice, but an active choice to act according to God’s justice, and not human ideas that are wrapped up in consumerism, individualism, and the acquisition of ‘things’. When we act in such a way, we can be part of the answer to our own prayers for justice!

Does that sound exciting? Or does it sound daunting? Maybe you’re sitting here thinking “but I’m not good enough.” Or, “But I’m not a powerful official like Daniel who can affect the legal system”. Or, “how do I even begin to respond to a massive problem like slavery?” The good news: you don’t have to be perfect, and you don’t have to do it all!”

First, even saints aren’t perfect. Moses killed a man and Paul persecuted Christians before his conversion. Many historical figures who are often referred to as ‘heroes of the faith’ made mistakes, had views that we might consider wrong today, or had broken relationships with family or friends. Jesus is the only one who is perfect. God chooses us despite our brokenness, perhaps even because of our brokenness, and

makes us perfect in him. There is no such thing as “good enough”. We must simply be faithful, each and every day, and forgive ourselves when we don’t get things right. Second, it’s not all on us. No one can single-handedly change the world. But we can journey alongside others, and together try to make a difference in our communities, and in communities far from us. Whether that’s fundraising for a charity like All We Can, being a church that welcomes people from the economic margins, thinking about our environmental footprint, or finding opportunities to learn from people with different life experiences to ours, we can together seek to bring a glimpse of God’s kingdom here on earth. And we do it all resting in God’s strength.

Saints, Sara Groves suggests, are often people who have reached their limit; people who are overwhelmed by the needs of those around them, but continue to be faithful to the call to justice that God calls us to. This doesn’t mean that we must submit to burnout, and sacrifice our own wellbeing so that others can thrive – far from it. One of the commitments of A Methodist Way of Life is that we “care for ourselves and others”. Both are important. When we recognise that we’re at that place where we can’t do it alone, it’s not about ‘just keeping on anyway’, it’s about recognising that fact, and turning to God.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians, we are marked by the Holy Spirit as belonging to, and chosen by, God. So, just like Paul, Silas, Moses, Harriet Tubman, and the staff at IJM, we can draw strength from God. We can be God’s hands and feet in the world because we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and faithful to the callings God places on us.

So who are our saints? Those who are faithful – who look to Christ’s rule above human injustice. Those who have a heart after Jesus’ own – who respond not with vengeance but with humility and love. Those led by the Holy Spirit, who act in God’s strength, and not their own. They might have changed the world, but they might also have changed a single life – perhaps yours, or someone you love.

And what could you do today to be counted in their number? Rev Dr Babu Immanuel Venkataraman suggests that “the value of a person is the value that God accords to the person. And he is particularly attuned to the poor and oppressed, because – as in the entire Old Testament – caring for them is the standard for justice and for godly behaviour”. So treat people, as Jesus said, as you would like to be treated – with the value that God has given each of us, who are made in God’s image. Care for and empower those in need, and care for yourself as well. Walk alongside people in friendship, just as Jesus walks alongside us.

*Here are some questions for reflection, which you may wish to use as part of the service and invite people to spend time in groups reflecting on, in light of today’s reading and message:*

- Who are the saints in your life?
- Why do you consider them to be a saint?
- What qualities do you think a saint might have?
- How might you learn from their example and be counted in their number?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Reflection written by Abi Jarvis



**Hymn:**

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

255 STF – The kingdom of God

**Prayers of intercession**

Holy God,

We give thanks for the saints in our lives, both those who are world-famous and those known only to a few. We thank you for those people who, through their words and actions, have shown your love, justice, mercy and compassion to this world. We thank you for those who have sacrificed for the flourishing of others. We thank you for the people who have been part of our faith journey, encouraging us to be faithful, to draw close to you, to speak and act from your heart. In silence or out loud, we speak their names to you now.

We pray for those who do not see saints near them, that you would bring people around them, to encourage, challenge and inspire them. May they find people to learn from, whether friends and family, or figures in books and internet searches. Just as Paul never stopped praying for the community in Ephesus, we pray with thanks and for enlightenment. We ask that you would reveal yourself to those searching for you, and for your saints, in voices and dreams, words and actions.

Help us to be saints to those around us. Help us to act in love, compassion and justice. Though our systems and institutions are not perfect, may we see your heavenly kingdom breaking through, that justice is done here on earth, as in heaven. Amen.<sup>6</sup>

**We will now take up the offering.**

Lord of all grace, thank you for the many gifts we have received. Bless these, our gifts, our response to your love. May they be put to use for the building of your Kingdom here on earth.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Hymn:**

53 STF – How shall I sing that majesty? OR

745 STF – For all the saints who from their labours rest

**Blessing**

Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you for being a God of justice, love and mercy. We ask that you help us to live after your example, to be models for those around us. Holy Spirit, fill us anew, that we might have the words to speak of your love, and that we would demonstrate that love through our actions.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Abi Jarvis

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker