

# twelvebaskets



## ALL SAINTS B

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

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**All Saints Sunday - Year B**  
3rd November 2024



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

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

**116 STF – Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**244 STF – Blest are the pure in heart OR**

**683 STF – Great is our redeeming Lord**

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-9; Revelation 21:1-6a; John 11:32-44

**Hymn:**

**530 STF – To be in your presence, to sit at your feet OR**

**732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**747 STF – Give me the wings of faith to rise within the veil, and see OR**

**738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

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

**503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling**

Blessing

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## **Call to worship**

This is the Lord's day,  
This is the day we turn aside  
This is the day we have marked for worship and praise.  
Lord Jesus, inspire and encourage us this day,  
By your Spirit we pray,

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

53 STF – How shall I sing that majesty? OR

116 STF – Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation

## **Opening Prayers**

Loving God, as we come to worship today we take our seats at the table, sitting alongside the Saints who have come before and beyond us. We take their hands at this table and find that, across age and time, you have been the common cord binding us all together. You are bigger than boundaries, beyond anything we can comprehend and we thank you.

Timeless God, as we come to worship today we enter into community with all those who have walked this Earth before and beyond us – both our loved ones dear to our hearts and strangers alike. We take their hands and find that, across age and time, you are so much bigger than that which separates us from one another now. Through you, we feel them beside us too and we worship you.

God of liminal spaces, your love is so much stronger than our flaws, failings, regrets or mistakes. At this table, we - and all those before and beyond us - are welcome, loved and filled with unimaginable goodness. We leave anything that gets in the way of us feeling the wonder of ourselves and all others at the door today and we love you.

God of glory, as we come to worship today we plug ourselves into all who have been a part of humankind's story. We take their hands at this table and again find that, across age and time, we are all your children and our stories are all part of your story. Help us to always remember that we are part of something much, much bigger.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

## All Age Talk

*Materials needed: A seed of your choice (optional, see below)*

Later in our service, we will hear a fantastic story about Jesus and how he brought someone back to life. Isn't that incredible? Imagine being there to see such a miracle! This story is about a man named Lazarus, who was very special to Jesus.

Let me give you a quick summary of what's happening in John 11:32-44. Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus, had died. He had been buried for four days, and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were very sad. Everyone was mourning because they loved Lazarus so much. When Jesus arrived, he saw how sad everyone was, and something unique happened — Jesus cried. Yes, Jesus, the Son of God, cried! He shared their sadness.

Then, Jesus did something even more impressive. He asked for the stone covering the entrance of Lazarus' tomb to be rolled away. Martha, Lazarus' sister, was a bit worried because it had been four days since Lazarus had died, and, well... let's say she was concerned about the smell!

When the stone was rolled away, Jesus prayed to his Father and then called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" And guess what happened? Lazarus, who had been dead, walked out of the tomb alive! He was wrapped in grave clothes, but he was alive again!

Let's pause for a moment. Can anyone imagine how the people there might have felt when they saw Lazarus return to life? (*Pause for answers from the children and congregation.*)

Maybe they were amazed, maybe some were scared, or maybe some were confused. But one thing was for sure — everyone there knew they were witnessing a miracle from God.

What does this mean for us? This story shows us a lot of things about Jesus. Let's break it down:

1. Jesus cares deeply: When Jesus saw Mary and the others crying, he cried too. This shows us that Jesus cares about our feelings. When we're sad, Jesus is with us.
2. Jesus has power over death: Jesus brought Lazarus back to life to show everyone He has power even over death. He was showing them, and us, that he is the source of life.
3. Jesus brings hope: Just like Lazarus was given a second chance at life, Jesus gives us new life too. We all face difficult times, but Jesus is always with us, ready to bring hope into even the darkest situations.

*Optional illustration:*

Now, I have something here with me — this (*hold up a seed*). This seed looks small, simple, and dead, right? It doesn't do much just sitting here. But if I plant it in the ground, give it water, and sunlight, something amazing happens. What do you think will happen? (*Wait for answers.*)

Yes! It will grow into something new, something alive! This seed reminds me of Lazarus. He was buried, just like a seed is buried in the ground, but Jesus brought him back to life. And in the same way, Jesus gives us new life, like how a seed grows into something beautiful and alive.

Jesus is the one who brings life — not just to Lazarus, but to all of us. Whenever we feel down, alone, or like we're facing a tough situation, we can remember that Jesus is with us, bringing life, hope, and love into our hearts. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

**Hymn:**

244 STF – Blest are the pure in heart OR

683 STF – Great is our redeeming Lord

**Readings:** Isaiah 25:6-9; Revelation 21:1-6a; John 11:32-44

**Hymn:**

530 STF – To be in your presence, to sit at your feet OR

732 STF – Day of judgment! Day of wonder!

**Reflections on the readings**

You may be familiar with the little poem, 'A People Place', attributed to William J. Crockett. The opening lines connect with all of our bible passages today:

'If this is not a place where tears are understood  
Where can I go to cry?'

People vary in how much or how often they shed tears – some of us rarely get through a day without the need for a tissue, for others, only the most painful or tragic happenings cause tears to flow. Each of these Bible readings talks about weeping as a widespread, universal occurrence, and in the gospel, we see women and men openly crying. Today, as we celebrate the season of All Saints, is a day when emotion may be close the surface, and that's okay.

Marking 1st November as All Saints Day began sometime in the 9th Century, so it is a very long-established part of the annual Christian calendar, but even before then days and dates had been set aside to remember those who had died in the faith – saints and martyrs, known and unknown. It remains a special season, connecting with our mixed emotions of thankfulness and sorrow – celebrating those people who have cheered us along the way, yet often still mourning their loss. Our worship today provides opportunities for these memories to be given time and space. Now for a few minutes, let's look at our Scripture passages and see how they provide a foundation for this feast day.

As we have noted, the passages from Isaiah, Revelation and John all include verses about weeping, so let's start there. Isaiah is prophesying at a time when Israel is yet again in disgrace, carried away into exile in Babylon and Assyria, separated from their beloved Jerusalem, the temple and their religious life, losing hope and in despair. So these verses are just what they want to hear and believe – that a day will come when God will "destroy the shroud that is cast over all peoples". Although these verses spell hope and restoration for Israel, they are not exclusive – the feast on the mountain will be for 'all peoples', 'all nations' are to be rescued and redeemed. The disgrace of Israel, who have failed in their

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

mission to lead the nations to God, will be taken away and, v 8 tells us, 'Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces' – the weeping and lamenting of Israel's disobedience and rebellion will be no more. That phrase 'wiped away' brings to mind a powerful and tender gesture demonstrating God's reconciling actions towards God's people. The act of wiping away someone's tears is a remarkably intimate thing to do, something we would only dare to do to someone to whom we are already very close; a parent may wipe away the tears of their child, a lover may wipe away the tears of their beloved, but it's not something we do to someone in the bus queue. But it is what God wants to do for us, to wipe away the tears from all faces.

That imagery is picked up in Revelation chapter 21, the penultimate chapter of the Bible, where again the writer evokes a time which will come, a time when everything is put right again. Just as the Bible begins with God creating the heaven and the earth and noting that it is all 'good', so the Bible ends with God's creation of a new heaven and a new earth, with the mistakes and misuses of humanity all destroyed. In this wonderful vision, as in Isaiah, God will be with God's people and 'will wipe every tear from their eyes... mourning and crying and pain will be no more'. Bring on that day!

These loving actions of God are demonstrated for us in the life of Jesus, God incarnate. What God will one day do for all humanity, Jesus comes and does for particular human beings at a particular time – a sign and foretaste of what is to come. So Jesus gathers with friends at a time of mourning. Lazarus, a man described earlier in the chapter as a man whom Jesus loved, has died. His sisters, Mary and Martha, are distraught and in these verses, Mary is weeping as she approaches Jesus, as indeed are the crowds who have also gathered near to the place of burial. Mary's distress moves Jesus greatly and he too begins to weep. This is a very well-known verse in the bible, in some translations it is just two words, 'Jesus wept', making it the shortest verse. It is also an extremely significant verse, demonstrating the full humanity of Jesus who enters into the emotional range of human life and knows what it is to grieve and to cry. Let's not forget that when we find we can't hold back the tears. There is no shame in needing to express our grief in this way. (As Gandalf tells his companions towards the end of the Lord of the Rings, when they are about to be separated, 'I will not say, 'do not weep', for not all tears are an evil'.)

So weeping is part of all these passages, and part of human life, and we are told that one day it will end, which is good news, but may not do much to address our present feelings of grief in this life. We all have reason to be sorrowful – we have all known the death of a friend or family member, we all look at the news and feel grief for the suffering of the innocent in war, through famine and disease, through human greed and exploitation. Why should we believe that one day tears will be wiped away and sorrow ended?

The second major theme which connects all these passages is that death, whilst a very real experience for us now, will not always have the upper hand. Death will be defeated. Hear again the verses from each reading:

- Isaiah - 'The Lord of hosts... will swallow up death for ever'.
- Revelation - 'Death will be no more'
- John - 'Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him and let him go"'.

The promise is very clear and very sure. Death will be destroyed once and for all. Again, something which is prophesied by Isaiah is explored by the Revelation of John - another book written in a time of oppression, persecution and despair - and is enfolded by Jesus who gives us the downpayment in raising Lazarus to life. God means business about destroying death. What that means for me and for you, with our own personal griefs and

sorrows, it's hard to say. Will we see our loved ones again? Or will it be better than that? We don't know and can't guess.

There is one more thing we do know, however, one more common feature in these three passages, and perhaps this is the one to which we have to cling in 2024 in the midst of all the sorrows and questions of our life now. There has to be a waiting time.

If you have time today, read the whole of John chapter 11 and notice how the tension is built up, with waiting time a very real part of the story. Having heard that Lazarus is ill, Jesus does not rush to Bethany, where they lived, but waits two days (v6). Why? When he does get there (v17) he finds that Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days, and Martha later points out that there will be a stench for that very reason. Martha comes out to meet Jesus and says, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died' (v21). When Mary meets Jesus, in today's passage, she says the same words, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died'. The implication is clear from both sisters, Jesus could have arrived earlier, he could have prevented Lazarus's death and the four days of weeping, mourning and heartbreak which Mary and Martha have experienced could have been avoided. But it wasn't. They had to wait, they had to suffer first. Why?

It's quite a hard question to answer, and maybe it's not the right question to ask. Maybe we simply have to say, 'That was how it happened, Jesus was some distance away, he was doing things he had to do, he didn't arrive until four days after the death'. All that is true, but perhaps we can also read into this something else which might help us deal with our own lives in the here and now. The final fulfilment of God's destruction of death is still in the future and so we have to endure the waiting time. Yes, the resurrection of Christ, even more than the raising of Lazarus, has sealed the deal, has shown God's hand, has demonstrated God's power over death, but we haven't reached that great and glorious day of which Isaiah and Revelation speak, not yet.

Isaiah and Revelation know that too: the whole book of Revelation is a collection of glimpses into an undated future, 'Then I looked' the writer begins chapter 21, and the words he hears from the throne are all about the future; God will be with them and wipe every tear, death will be no more.' Words of assurance, but words which point to the future. It doesn't take away the pain of the present, but it makes it much easier to bear. We know that is true of all the pain we feel; a broken bone hurts, but knowing it will one day mend means we can bear it. That's why chronic pain and incurable illness is so horrendous to live with, there is no hope of release, other than death.

So, although in this season of All Saints we may and should shed tears for the pain of heartbreak we know in our lives, missing those we love, we can believe that the pain we feel will one day come to an end. Our calling for now is to live in the present and deal with whatever we have to deal with, but never forgetting that there is a day when the pain will be no more. The final verse from the Isaiah passage sums it up perfectly: 'It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.'

- Let's sit quietly for a few moments and allow our own emotions to come to the surface...
- Tissues will be passed around – please take one, you may need it yourself, if not, hold it and think of those you miss and those you know who are grieving today.
- After a few moments, read aloud together the words from Revelation: (which could be on the screen or printed out):

'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.'

- If it seems appropriate, share together in some conversation around these questions:
  - Do you agree that knowing that pain will come to an end makes it easier to bear? Do you have experience of this?
  - How do you respond to the saying: 'It will be all right in the end, and if it's not all right, it's not the end'.
  - How, as a church community, can we be a place 'where tears are understood'?<sup>4</sup>

### Hymn:

747 STF – Give me the wings of faith to rise within the veil, and see OR

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth

### Prayers of intercession

We pray today for all who are overwhelmed by grief...

Grief for loved ones who have died...

Grief for the harsh realities of living with war, famine, oppression, exploitation...

Grief for family and friends living with pain and distress...

God of all comfort, draw near in Christ to all who weep. Wipe away their tears, assure them of your presence, give courage for the next step... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We pray today for all who are saying, 'If only...'

If only you had been here...

If only this hadn't happened...

If only I had known...

God of all compassion, draw near in Christ to all who wish things were different. Show them your heart of sorrow and speak to them your words of healing and restoration... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We pray today for all who work in places of death and despair...

For medical staff dealing daily with the stench and heartbreak of death...

For counsellors seeking to accompany people on difficult journeys...

For the Samaritans, listening to those who have lost their way in life...

God of all understanding, draw near in Christ to all who seek to offer hope and purpose. Stand by them as they face the abyss and point them towards the glory which is to come... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Jill Baker



We pray today for all who are bound by the forces of evil and oppression...

For people trafficked to satisfy the lusts of others and forced into modern day slavery...

For refugees and asylum seekers trapped by hostile legislation...

For all imprisoned unjustly for speaking truth to power...

God of all goodness, draw near in Christ to all who are victims of injustice. Show them your wounds, unbind their chains and show them your face of love and heart of mercy... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give thanks today for all who have gone before us and showed us the way...

For the saints whose lives inspire us to persevere in the journey, step by step...

For our loved ones who showed us something of your nature in their lives...

For those whose witness and sacrifice built this community in this place...

God of all time, you hold in your hands the lives of all who have lived, the lives of all who will live, and our own lives. We bless you for Christ, in whom all things hold together and we pray for the church... Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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

Living, loving God, even as we wait for your glory to be revealed,

Your plans and schemes to become reality,

Your love to be made known to each and every one of us,

We know there is much work to be done.

Bless these gifts, and the gifts we carry with us every day,

May we use them for your glory,

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hymn:**

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

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling

### **Blessing**

Bless each and every one of these, your people, O God,

Bless our homes, and our hearts,

Bless our families and friends,

Bless our relationships and our resilience.

May we carry that blessing with us, into the week ahead, and to all who we meet,

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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