

# twelvebaskets



## ALL SAINTS DAY B

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

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**All Saints Day - Year B**  
31st October 2021



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

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

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

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**735 STF – How blest are they who trust in Christ OR**

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

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

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God OR**

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

What am I being called to?

**Hymn:**

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

**690 STF – The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

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

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

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

On this Sunday, we celebrate All Saints – we celebrate all who have come before, all who have shaped our journey of faith, all who have left us with their wisdom, their testimony, their hope.

We stand on the shoulders of giants, and we worship with a great cloud of witnesses this day.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

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

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

## Opening Prayers

Almighty Creator,

As the leaves change colour and the cold winds blow, we draw together. As Wesley was once strangely warmed, may we this day feel that warming love of God in our hearts.

May we, as a loving community of Christ, be a witness of your eternal love and be boastful in our praise for you.

We come as individuals, but are one family in you, as you are many and one in love. And we gather to sing and praise you!

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

### All Age Talk

Have you ever cried? The answer is most likely yes.

Perhaps today you can be brave enough to let us know if any of these things have happened to you.

Raise your hand if you have ever fallen over and hurt yourself so much that you cried?

*[Wait for response]*

Raise your hand if someone has ever said something that has hurt your feelings and you cried?

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

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Annan-Hood

*[Wait for response]*

Raise your hand if you have ever cried because someone else was crying?

*[Wait for response]*

We all cry and did you know that Jesus cried? In fact, it is the shortest verse that we find in the whole entire Bible. “Jesus Wept”. It is one of the verses in our readings today.

Why did Jesus cry though?

Jesus had a friend named Lazarus who became very sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus and asked him to come and heal Lazarus, but when Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already died. The Bible tells us that when Jesus saw Mary weeping because her brother had died, he cried too.

Jesus went with Mary and Martha to visit the grave where Lazarus was buried. This large cave was covered when they arrived, but Jesus asked for the stone to be moved. After Jesus simply shouted, out came Lazarus who was dead but is now alive again. The tears of sadness became tears of joy. His friend was alive and well! A miracle has happened.

We all cry, which is ok. But, what is encouraging is that we have a God that weeps (cries) to. He loves us so much and even when we are hurting, God comes alongside us and feels our pain.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

**Hymn:**

735 STF – How blest are they who trust in Christ OR

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

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

**Reflections on the reading**

In some ways, the last 18 or 19 months have been defined by death. Our generation has lived through its first pandemic and – at the time of writing – Covid-19 has an official global death toll of over 4.5 million people, with over a thousand more people being added to that number every day.

Those daily numbers of deaths have decreased dramatically over the last few months, and we’ve been through scarier times during this pandemic – doesn’t it already feel a long time since that initial lockdown, with all the fear and uncertainty surrounding this new disease? Like all societies, we’ve learned to adapt and survive...but we cannot turn away from the fact there has been so much death. And,

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

of course, if you knew any one of those 4.5 million people, you didn't experience that death as a statistic, you knew the personal pain and grief that comes with saying goodbye.

And, if you did have to go to a Covid-funeral – or would have chosen to but couldn't because of restricted numbers or medical advice, you know that this year hasn't just been about statistics, it's also been a time when we've realised how difficult it is to grieve in a world of social distancing. So much of the way we grieve is by simply being together.

See, for example, in the book of Job, which we have just been journeying with in the lectionary over the last few weeks. In his time of need, Job's friends come to be with him. For a little while, they did the most helpful thing you can do with someone travelling through grief – they simply sit with him. They don't say anything or pontificate, they are simply there. That is what it has been so hard to do this last year and a half, with all the restrictions in place.

Because, from that point on, the book of Job reads a little like a manual for how NOT to be a good friend in a time of need / grief! They try to rationalise, they tell Job what to do, they make judgements about who Job is or his life choices. Suddenly they go from good, present, non-judgemental friends, to being part of the problem.

You will all have your story of grief. Perhaps from the last 18 months, or perhaps your scars are slightly older than that – from the loss of a friend, a family member, a parent, a child, an unborn baby, a pet, or the grief of losing someone you didn't know but who had a profound impact on you – such as a preacher, celebrity or hero. We all have our own stories of grief.

In the midst of all that pain, all that death, today's readings seem to show us what hope looks like, in that context. Not a glib, false, happy-clappy hope. But a deeper, base-note kind of hope that maybe, just maybe, one day there will be a world where every tear is wiped away (that phrase appears in both Isaiah and Revelation). As is quoted in the Richard Curtis film, *About Time*: 'like most families, we learned to live with life after death'. We are all going to have to do that – again – as we rebuild for life in late 2021 and beyond. As we continue to feel the effects of the pandemic, but also continue our journey out of restrictions, we too need to learn how to live with life after death, how to grieve and heal and comfort and hope again.

A few weeks ago, whilst preparing some worship materials for All We Can – which happened to be based on the first 6 verses of Revelation 21, one of today's lectionary readings – I had a profound experience of weeping uncontrollably at my desk. The power of the writer's poetry and imagery, and the richness of the hope in those verses, in light of all the pain our world has had to carry during these past months, brought me to tears. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, because 'the old things will pass away'. And God will 'wipe away every tear', 'death will be no more' because, 'see, I am making all things new'. I felt then, as I feel now, the yearning of a world so worn down by death and pain that we are ready for something new. For a new heaven and a new earth, and for all the anxieties, pains and fears to

pass away, in the arms of a God who wipes away every single tear. Let us pray for that kind of world. And work to bring it about.

Perhaps we see something of Jesus' own personal longing for this kind of world in today's gospel reading. In this story, of the death of his friend Lazarus, we see Jesus as both fully human and fully divine. Human in the sense of his grief – that grief we can relate to, the grief of being human and knowing we will have to say goodbye to those we love at some point. Divine in that, in the frustration and pain of grief, he cannot help but use all his faith and pray to his Father for a miracle of resurrection, and then everything we would all hope for in this situation happens. By some miracle, the person they are grieving for, the man about whom so many people gathered that day would have been saying: 'if only I had chance to see him again', 'I'd have liked to have told him one last time that I loved him', 'I wish I'd had chance to apologise for that argument we had'...all the regrets and wishes of the grieving. By some miracle, those wishes all come true – and out strolls Lazarus.

Jesus, too, struggles with death. Jesus weeps too. Jesus feels the pain of grieving for a friend. So, when you feel that pain, that grief, Jesus is right there with you. You are not suffering alone, and God travels with us in our pain. The divine is somehow present with us, even in this year of so much death.

One of the other interesting things to note about this story from John's gospel, which is our traditional All Saints reading, is to see how it is this moment at Lazarus' tomb-side that sets off the authorities desire to have Jesus killed. It is this moment, when he overturns the ultimate status quo – death – that really worries them. I'm not sure what the authorities thought: that Jesus was going to raise a Zombie-style army of the undead to bring down the Empire? Or perhaps they were more scared that if his power extended even over death, then it may know no end? Or perhaps they simply realised that death was the ultimate system of power and control the Empire had over its citizens. If you can't threaten them with capital punishment, because they believe in resurrection, how do you control them?

Jesus himself, of course, embodies this dynamic. Once the authorities finally had enough of him and the way he challenged the status quo, they had him killed. Then comes the moment in the Jesus stories that has defined our faith ever since – the resurrection. But Jesus' resurrection was illegal. The state, the Jewish authorities, the whole Roman Empire had declared that he should die and he had been put to death – in that particularly malicious way the Romans had for killing and torturing people. Then, later that weekend, he is up and about and clearly not dead: this is a direct defiance of the state. In the Easter stories, coupled with this amazing moment in John 11, we see the power of resurrection. These resurrection narratives leave us with the knowledge, the hope, the faith that death cannot control us. That the fear of death is not the only force at work in this world. That worst thing is never the last thing. 'See, I am making all things new'.

Let's cling to that hope in new life, in new possibility, in resurrection. Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of Coronavirus, we will fear no evil, for our

God and our shepherd is right there beside us, knowing our pain, never diminishing our suffering, but always pointing us towards the light.

As Leonard Cohen put it: 'There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.'<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn:**

742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God OR

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

**What are you being called to?**

Rather than words, let us use this space simply to be open to our emotions. Today, perhaps what you are being called to is to listen to that still, small voice. Today, the invitation is to be real, be vulnerable with yourself.

Perhaps there's something you need to feel, to process, to open yourself up to. Let's listen to this music, and be real with ourselves.

*[Play some calming gentle music – perhaps something from the Taize community or some gentle classical / choral music. Otherwise, your musicians could play softly for a few minutes].*

Let us pray.

Lord God, you know us, just as we are, and you know everything about us.

As we open ourselves up to your Spirit, in your name, this day, show us how to love, how to hope, how to grieve, how to weep, and how to travel this road together.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Come, Creator God.

Amen.

**Hymn:**

244 STF – Blest are the pure in heart OR

690 STF – The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord

**Prayers of intercession**

Let us open our hearts and be vulnerable before Jesus as we share what is on our hearts.

*(If it is your practice, there is time indicated below to share prayer needs communally)*

“Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

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

‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

On this All Saints Day, we remember all those who have gone before us in faith, spanning back to the very formations of our faith. It’s a time to acknowledge that they are still here with us today. We keep them alive in our lives each day by sharing stories of their lives with those around us. Their example and influence on our lives can be seen daily as is our love for them shared in our stories and memories. These ordinary saints we remember this day no longer age but are here with us this day. In the peace, let us uplift their names and memories, and share with them and the Lord our hurts.

*[If it is your practice, there is time indicated below to share prayer needs communally, or sit in a time of quiet while people bring their own prayers]*

With the saints around us, both physically and spiritually, let us give thanks to God, and praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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

#### **Blessing the offering**

Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the many gifts you have given us, for the grace to be gathered here in your presence this morning. May these gifts be put to good use, for the building of the kingdom, and may we continue to serve you in all the ways that we can.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Hymn:**

683 STF – Great is our redeeming Lord OR

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

#### **Blessing**

God is with you, and God is before you,  
As you rise from this space, may the grace of God be known in your hearts, your minds and the way you connect with all creation.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Annan-Hood

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

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