

Sermon for All Saints, Sunday October 30th 2022.

[Daniel 7: 1-3, 15-18](#)

[Psalm 149](#)

[Ephesians 1:11-end](#)

[Luke 6:20-31](#)

The first question today is 'Why are we celebrating All Saints today when it's not even Halloween yet'? Halloween should be tomorrow, All Saints should be on Tuesday. A similar question could apply to our annual memorial service, which should be on All Souls Day, which is on Wednesday. These questions can be answered by the response that this is the nearest Sunday to them, and by blaming the calendar for moving on a day.

My family must have an affinity for this dedication, for not only did we come here from another All Saints back in 1977, so long ago now that I guess some of the present congregation hadn't been born then, but Gill's sister, together with her husband, live on an All Saints Road in Highfield, in the suburbs of Oxford and go to another church dedicated to All Saints just along the road from them. Until quite recently it had the distinction of having the longest serving incumbent in the Church of England. He had been vicar there since 1957!

So where did we come from? it was Wakefield Cathedral, and it was and is famous for what is claimed to be the largest memorial to a Bishop in the Anglican Communion, for the whole east end, and that includes the crypt, which is not at all the sort of dank, gloomy place you may be thinking of, but is in my memory light and airy. A place made for Sunday School and Coffee after services, and particularly remembered for the well-attended refreshments on Christmas Morning. It was designed as a memorial to William Walsham How the first bishop of Wakefield who is held responsible for that well-known Hymn 'For All The Saints' which I'm pleased to say is on the music list for today, and we'll be singing it in due course.

The version we have in our hymnal is a little modified, in actuality the hymn book gives two versions, numbers 177 and 178 in our hymnal both of which have 8 verses, and the earlier words have a more 'military' feel to them as indeed does Psalm 149, the psalm set for today but which we don't use as it's not yet the season of Advent. We only normally use a psalm in Lent and Advent, the 2 penitential seasons .

It is interesting to speculate as to why there should be this 'military' emphasis, apart from simply regarding it as representing, in the Hymn, a Victorian attitude to the world over which they ruled as an Imperial Power. Certainly, the world has had its fill of militarism and could do with a respite from it.

The earlier words, which run to 11 verses, must reflect a Victorian liking for long hymns, all of which I've given below for your illumination. Don't worry, I have no intention of reading them all, just referring to some of them which are in **Bold** or *Italic*!

1. For all the saints, who from their labours rest,  
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,  
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

**2. 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!**

*3. For the Apostles' glorious company,  
Who bearing forth the Cross o'er land and sea,  
Shook all the mighty world, we sing to Thee:*

*Alleluia, Alleluia!*

**4. O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,  
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,  
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!**

*5. For the Evangelists, by whose blest word,  
Like fourfold streams, the garden of the Lord,  
Is fair and fruitful, be Thy Name adored.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*6. For Martyrs, who with rapture kindled eye,  
Saw the bright crown descending from the sky,  
And seeing, grasped it, Thee we glorify.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

**7. O blest communion, fellowship divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!**

**8. And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave, again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!**

**9. The golden evening brightens in the west;  
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;  
Sweet is the calm of paradise the blessed.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!**

**10. But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;  
The saints triumphant rise in bright array;  
The King of glory passes on His way.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!**

**11. 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!**

Verses 2,4, 8 and 9. perhaps show a 'military' flavour saying, things like  
...Thou, Lord, their Captain in the well fought fight;  
And  
...O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,  
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,  
Also we could mention  
...And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And  
...Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest.

Personally verses 3,5 and 6 with their references to Apostles, Evangelists and Martyrs were previously unknown to me, but omitting them gets us to the 8 verses of our hymn.

to refer to our Readings, in the Old Testament Reading, we have Daniel, the visions of whose head terrified him and quite who the attendants he asked about them are is not really clear.

In the New Testament reading Paul writes to the people of Ephesus, saying: 'I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints'.

So, who are these saints? It wouldn't be my Sermon if I didn't leave you with some Questions to think over.

Are they the ones referred to in our Gospel? (Luke's version of the beatitudes, sometimes referred to as the Sermon on the Plain, there is another version, perhaps better known as the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew, which gives more of the beatitudes) Interestingly most of the translations of our Gospel use 'blessed' or 'happy' as a translation of the Greek which says something about convergence among translations.

Do these Saints see themselves as Soldiers for Christ? Or are they Peacemakers - the world could do with a few more Peacemakers, for in many walks of life the world is a troubled place, war in Ukraine, famine and strife in many places, climate change happening rapidly .

Are they like Daniel in the Old Testament Reading or are they more like Paul's people in Ephesus.

Do they or we identify with 'We feebly struggle, they in glory shine'

Or are they those who do their best to love their enemies, as the end of our Gospel passage exhorts us to do. It is interesting that the Gospel ends with a version of the Golden Rule by saying . 'Do to others as you would have them do to you.'

In reality any one of us could qualify as a Saint, for I don't feel that you need to be especially holy or different to fit the criteria. To act as a Soldier for Christ or take the gospel far and wide as an Evangelist seems a lot to ask, just trying hard to do more good than harm in the world is enough for most of us. I have to thank the late Revd John de Wit for this closing thought. So I bid you welcome to the community of All The Saints, that countless host of which the last verse of our Hymn speaks.