

All Saints Day  
01-11-2020  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Revelation 7: 9-17	A great multitude worshipping before the throne of God
Psalms 34: 1-10,22	Those who fear and trust the Lord will be saved
1 John 3:1-3	Those who are God's children now live in Hope
Matthew 5: 1-12	The Beatitudes – Blessed are those who live God's way

### Introduction

Today is All Saint's Day and I would like us to look at :-

- Who is a Saint?
- Why do we have a day to remember All Saints?
- What might it mean for us to be Saint's today?

### Who is a Saint?

Firstly, what do we think of when we hear the word saint? Maybe people depicted in stained glass windows. Maybe St Cuthbert who our church here in Tweed Heads is named in memory of, because he lived near the Tweed River in England. Maybe one of the Twelve Apostles, who were the first followers of Jesus. In the Roman Catholic Church tradition they have a process for deciding who can be officially named a Saint within the Church. But in its simplest definition, a saint is just someone who has decided to repent and follow Jesus in their lives. In Paul's letters to the Romans and the Ephesians we hear the word Saints used synonymously with those who are Christians.

So, to be a Saint is to be a Christian, and the Christian rite of initiation is Baptism. So, let us look at what we profess at our Baptism. Following are the questions and responses outlined in the part of the Baptism Service entitled "The Decision" :-

Before God and this congregation, you must affirm that you turn to Christ and reject all that is evil:

Do you turn to Christ?

**I turn to Christ.**

Do you repent of your sins?

**I repent of my sins.**

Do you reject all selfish living, and all that is false and unjust?

**I reject them all.**

Do you renounce Satan and all evil?

**I renounce all that is evil.**

Almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness, and lead you in the light of Christ to his everlasting kingdom.

**Amen.**

*The priest says to the candidates and sponsors*

Will you each, by God's grace, strive to live as a disciple of Christ, loving God with your whole heart, and your neighbours as yourself, until your life's end?

**I will, with God's help.**

*The priest says to the congregation*

You have heard *these our brothers and sisters* respond to Christ. Will you support *them* in this calling?

*The congregation answers*

**We will.**

So, a Saint is someone who has chosen to accept Jesus, and to live as a follower of Jesus. We see in the Baptismal promises that whilst deciding to follow Jesus is very personal, it is not private. The congregation is involved with the promises that are made.

We hear these words from our readings today that remind us that being a Saint is to be a part of something much bigger than ourselves.

From the Book of Revelation we hear :-

<sup>9</sup> After this 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.

And from the first letter of John we hear :-

<sup>1</sup> See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

Saints by definition, are those who follow Jesus, and Saints by definition gather together to support one another.

Why do we have a day to remember All Saints?

So why has the Church set aside a day to remember all Saints?

This is what my book of Saints says:-

“From its earliest days, the Church has recognized as its foundation stones those heroes of the faith whose lives have excited others to holiness and has assumed a communion between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven.”

It goes on to describe how All Saints day began to be observed by the Church, quite early in the life of the Church, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. It was initially observed straight after the feast of Pentecost. It made sense to have the two together, as Pentecost was the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church, and All Saints remembered

those who founded and continued the Church. In the 8th century a pope decided to dedicate a chapel to All Saints on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, and after a little while this also became the date it was observed in Britain.

We remember the Saints because it is they who have passed the faith on to us.

### What does it mean for us to be Saints Today?

And so what might it mean for us to be saints today?

It is very appropriate that the Gospel reading set down for today is the Beatitudes. The beatitudes seem quite beautiful as we listen to them, but as we dwell on the words, their reality becomes more challenging. What might it mean for us in our lives to be poor, or to mourn, or to be meek or hungry, or to be merciful or pure, or to be peacemakers? If we look around our world today what we would give for leaders who want to be peacemakers. As human beings we seem to be thriving on conflict and division.

The Beatitudes point us to a very different way of life. It was different and radical in Jesus day when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount. And although many parts of our society have been influenced and shaped by Christianity, the idea's contained in the beatitudes that we have heard this morning are still challenging and radical for us to live into today.

In verses 11 and 12 we hear Jesus say :-

<sup>11</sup> 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

I don't want you to think that you should be being persecuted if you are living out your faith in following Jesus, but if you are following Jesus, then your life should look different to those around you who are not Christians. The Good News of Jesus is something that is to be lived out and shared. That is what the first Saints believed, and that is what we as Saints today are called to do.

### Conclusion

Christianity is not a faith that exists in a vacuum. It begins with a relationship with God through Jesus, and it is nurtured and encouraged by the relationships we have with other Christians.

We remember All Saints Day because we are strengthened in our faith by those who share their faith, in their lives, with us.

How is your relationship with Jesus, and how are your relationships with our church family?

Will it be said of us "They helped me to know and follow Jesus in my life?" Amen.