

New Scotland Presbyterian Church  
Worship for All Saints Day  
(video link at <https://www.newscotlandpc.com/>)  
November 1, 2020  
The Rev. Holly S. Cameron

Prelude

Ryan Dwyer

“When the Saints Go Marching In”

Introduction

*Welcome to All Saints Day worship at New Scotland Presbyterian Church. Thank you to the Dwyers for the flowers, given to the glory of God for today’s service.*

*Since it is the first Sunday of the month, we will be celebrating communion, so you are invited to gather elements to participate. Jesus sat at a dinner table with his friends, and used elements common to them: bread and wine. You are invited to use elements that are common to your table – bread or cracker or chip; and juice or wine or other drink, even water will do. You might set these on a special cloth and include a candle or flower or something to welcome guests to a meal. You may add a photo of someone you love. Take a moment to gather those elements now.*

Call to Worship

Hebrews 12:1

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

Hymn

Choir

“For All the Saints” verses 1,2,3 #526 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Opening Prayer

Holy God, as we gather to worship you this day of All Saints, we ask that you strengthen our memories, not only of your promises, but also of those who have inspired us, challenged us, lifted us, supported us, taught us the gospel, broken bread with us, and shown us how to serve. Help us to recognize when we are indifferent to your will. You call us to proclaim your name, but often we are silent. You call us to do what is just, but time and again we remain idle. You call us to live faithfully, but we are regularly filled with fear. In your mercy, forgive us when we fall short, when we live for only for ourselves and apart from you. Give us courage and confidence to follow in your way. Fill us with faith, hope, and love that we may walk with your saints, and serve you faithfully; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Beloved in Christ: Through the eyes of grace, God sees all that is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable in us. Let us wipe away, like tears, all that binds us up, for God is inviting us to new beginnings. Thanks be to God! Amen.

### Epistle Lesson First John 3:1-3

<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. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

### Kids' Time

*For those unable to see the video, the children's sermon is about the holiday of All Saints Day. We are all saints, because God created each one of us. God loves us and calls us to share our gifts in God's world. Now it's time to see the photos that remind us of God's love and hope and joy. {photos.}*

*Keep sending us your photos so we can share them in the coming weeks!*

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for the fun times we have dressing up and pretending to be like someone else. And thank you for creating us to be just who we are. Help us to discover the gifts you have given us, the talents we have, the things we love to do, and the things we do that make others feel special. Help us to love our gifts and to share them in your world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### Gospel Lesson Matthew 5:1-12

<sup>1</sup> When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup> "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<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.

### Sermon

One of my first sermons was on this passage from Matthew about the beatitudes. In that sermon I talked about my dislike for some modern translations of the Bible that changed the word "blessed" to the word "happy." Like, "happy are those who work for peace; happy are those who are humble..." I don't like those translations because I don't think being blessed is the same thing as being happy. I have never met someone in mourning who is happy, but I have met people in mourning who feel blessed.

Being blessed, I think, is about recognizing God's presence with us. That can happen when we are in a happy situation. But recognizing God's presence can also happen when we are in some of the worst places of life. When we have lost a job, or a friend, or our parent dies, or our child's heart is broken – those are some of the times

when we really feel God present with us, in the beauty of a sunrise, or cards from our community, or a visit from a friend who does not try to make it better but just sits with us right where we are. Those are times when we may feel blessed though most certainly not happy.

This week I read a commentator who notes that one Hebrew word, *‘ashar*, that we translate as “blessing,” really means “to find the right road.” As in: “You are on the right road when you walk, not in the way of unrighteousness but in the way of the Law of God.”<sup>[1]</sup> That feels like what I am saying. If you are on the right road, you are in the neighborhood, you are in the place where you feel God’s presence.

If being blessed is about recognizing God’s presence, then we might hear Jesus’ list of blessings a bit differently. Because some of us can read it and think, “O, if I want to be blessed, then I have to be like that – more meek, more merciful, more pure in heart.” And, don’t get me wrong, I think the world would be a better place if more us were trying to be like that. But I think we make a mistake if we think God’s blessings are only for those who are trying so hard to be better – as if we can will ourselves into God’s grace.

It seems to me this list of beatitudes is not about how God wants us to be, rather it is a list of how things are. The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber puts it this way:

Maybe the Sermon on the Mount is all about Jesus ... lavishing blessings on the world around him, especially that which society does not seem to have much time for, like people in pain, and people who work for peace instead of profit, people who exercise mercy instead of vengeance. So maybe Jesus is actually just blessing people, especially the people who never seem to receive blessing otherwise. I mean ... doesn’t that just sound like something Jesus would do – extravagantly throwing around blessings like they grow on trees?<sup>[2]</sup>

So, as we think about how our world is now, the things that are not held in high esteem now, we might think about who else Jesus would be blessing. Pastor Nadia names some of them in a new list of beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are the agnostics.

Blessed are they who doubt, those who aren’t sure, [for they] can still be surprised.

Blessed are they who are spiritually impoverished and therefore not so certain about everything that they can no longer take in new information.

Blessed are those who have nothing to offer.

Blessed are they for whom nothing seems to be working.

Blessed are the pre-schoolers who cut in line at communion.

Blessed are the poor in spirit you are of Heaven and Jesus blesses you.

Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

Blessed are they for whom death is not an abstraction.

Blessed are they who have buried their loved ones, for whom tears are as real as an ocean.

Blessed are they who have loved enough to know what loss really feels like.

Blessed are the mothers of the miscarried.  
Blessed are they who do not have the luxury of taking things for granted any more.  
Blessed are they who cannot fall apart because they have to keep it together for everyone else.  
Blessed are the motherless, the alone, the ones from whom so much has been taken.  
Blessed are those who still are not over it yet.  
Blessed are they who laughed again when for so long they thought they never would.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for you are of Heaven and Jesus blesses you.  
Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those whom no one else notices: the kids who sit alone at middle school lunch tables, the laundry guys at the hospital, the sex workers, and the night-shift street-sweepers.  
Blessed are the losers, and the babies, and the parts of ourselves that are so small, the parts of ourselves that don't want to make eye contact with the world that only loves the winners.  
Blessed are the forgotten.  
Blessed are the closeted.  
Blessed are the unemployed, the unimpressive, the underrepresented.  
Blessed are the teens who have to figure out ways to hide new cuts on their arms.  
Blessed are the meek. You are of Heaven and Jesus blesses you.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the wrongly accused, the ones who never catch a break, the ones for whom life is hard, for they are those with whom Jesus chose to surround himself.  
Blessed are those without documentation.  
Blessed are the ones without lobbyists.  
Blessed are foster kids, and trophy kids, and special-ed. kids, and every other kid who just wants to feel safe and loved and never does.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.  
Blessed are they who know there has to be more than this because they are right.  
Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy.  
Blessed are those who make terrible business decisions for the sake of people.  
Blessed are the burned out social workers, and overworked teachers, and the pro-bono case-takers.  
Blessed are the kids who step between the bullies and the weak.  
Blessed are they who delete hateful comments off their ... Facebook page.

Blessed are the ones who have received such real grace that they are no longer in the position of ever deciding who the deserving poor are. Blessed is everyone who has ever forgiven me when I didn't deserve it. Blessed are the merciful, for they totally get it.<sup>[3]</sup>

I love this picture she paints, of Jesus blessing all the things we try to hide, all the ways we believe we are not good enough, all the things we judge in ourselves and others. But, she says, Jesus offered blessings to us, even before he spoke the beatitudes.

Because, after all, it was Jesus who had all the powers of the universe at his disposal but who did not consider his equality with God as something to be exploited. But instead came to us in the most vulnerable of ways, as a powerless flesh-and-blood newborn. As though to say, "you may hate your bodies but I am blessing all human flesh. You may admire strength and might but I am blessing all human weakness. You may seek power but I am blessing all human vulnerability."

This Jesus, whom we follow, cried at the tomb of his friend, and turned the other cheek, and forgave those who hung him on a cross. He was God's beatitude, God's blessing to the weak, in a world that only admires the strong.<sup>[4]</sup>

And, she concludes:

So if you're [in worship today] mourning, or feeling forsaken, abused, unseen, or no longer useful – if you perhaps, like myself, are all too aware that it is not your strength and virtue that qualify you to be called a saint, but your need for a God who makes beautiful things of things out of dust – then this meal we are about to eat is for you, and for all people. It is as much for we who believe we have no need for it, as it is for we who believe we are not worthy of it.

And know that it is not your ability to do for yourself, but your hunger that qualifies you to be fed.<sup>[5]</sup>

On All Saints Day, I can't think of a better message: Blessed are you because God created you and the world can never take away, or fully cover up, the divine spark in you. See what love God has that you are called a child of God, a beautiful mortal with the image of God stamped on you. You are blessed; you are loved – even the broken places.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

### Song

"Saints and Sinners"

Choir

### Pastoral Prayer

Eternal God, you have had many friends on this earth, those who heard your promises, and shared them with their neighbors; those who have done the things you have asked, working and speaking out for justice, and offering kindness to those who are hurting. Let us, too, be your friends on this earth, living by faith, and believing in your promises.

As your friends, we pray for all those in trouble this day. We pray for people living without compassion; for those struggling with illness of mind or body or spirit; for

all people who live where strife and conflict, and rumors of strife and conflict, bring fear and danger; for those who see your beautiful creation being destroyed.

In the midst of these and all the struggles of life, we trust in your promises. We ask you to work through us, giving us courage and strength and confidence in maintaining your hope.

We pray for the ministry of this church and all churches. We pray for creativity and joy. We pray for respite from the harsh words of the world, and the comfort and peace that comes from your Word. Open our hearts to hear the stories of anyone who has been touched by your presence. Let us grow and serve, by faith, just as our spiritual ancestors did.

Help us to know the one they followed, your Son Jesus Christ. And hear us as we say the prayer he taught us:

### Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### Communion

Today we celebrate the Lord's Supper with elements that we have at our own tables. When we gather around the sanctuary table, I always remind us that it is not the church's table, it is the Lord's table. Now, as we are apart one from another, we see that the table is expanded. It is no longer just your family table. We invite the Lord to all our tables, and he becomes our host. He feeds everyone who is hungry, so all are welcome at this meal.

### The Great Thanksgiving

Let us lift our hearts to the Lord, and offer our thanks and praise. Let us pray.

O God, Creator and ruler of the universe, we praise you for saints and martyrs, for the faithful in every age who have followed your Son and witnessed to his resurrection. From every race and tongue, from every people and nation, you have gathered them into your kingdom. You have shown them the path of life and filled them with the joy of your presence. How glorious is your heavenly realm where the multitude of your saints rejoice with Christ!

Therefore, we praise you with angels and archangels, with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name, with the words of the sanctus and benedictus:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.**

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Sent to be our Savior, Jesus took on our flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. His words are true. His touch brings healing. He gives abundant life to all who follow

him. When evil sought to destroy him, and he lay in the darkness of death, you raised him from the grave. He is our risen Lord forever!

Remembering your mighty and merciful acts, we take our bread and our cups, from the gifts you have given us, and celebrate with joy the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ. With thanksgiving we offer our praise, and we offer our very selves to you, to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service. Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.**

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon your gifts, that the bread we break and the cup we bless may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ that we may be one with all who share this feast, united in ministry in every place. As this bread is Christ's body for us, send us out to be the body of Christ in the world.

Number us among your saints, O God, and join us with the faithful of every age, that, strengthened by their fellowship, we may run with perseverance the race that is set before us, and may, with them, receive the unfading crown of glory when we stand before your throne of grace. Give us the strength to serve you faithfully until the promised day of resurrection, when, with the redeemed of all the ages, we will feast with you at your table in glory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory, praise, and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever.

**Amen, amen, amen.**

### Breaking the Bread

*{Break your bread as these words are said.}*

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, sat with his friends at a dinner table. He took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

*{Pour your drink into a cup, or, if already in a cup, lift the cup as these words are said.}*

In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, which is poured out for you, and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

*{Lift up the bread and cup.}*

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Take; eat the bread of heaven, and drink and the cup of new life.

### Prayer After Communion

**Gracious God, you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Help us who have shared Christ's body and received his cup, to be his faithful disciples, so that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and our love be**

**your love, reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Hymn

Choir

“I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” #364 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Offering

Remember the words of scripture: Do good, and share what you have with others, for these are the sacrifices that are pleasing to God (Heb.13:16).

*We give thanks for our many gifts. Churches depend on the generosity of members and friends to support their ministries. If you are able to mail in an offering, or give online at <https://www.newscotlandpc.com/>, we are grateful. If all you can do is offer prayers for the church, we love you for that gift. Whether it's money, time, attention, a phone call, a text, an e-mail, a smile, a decoration in your window or yard – there are so many ways we can reach out to others and know we are not alone. We are blessed to be able to connect to one another and to love one another. Thank you for your generous giving!*

Song of Praise

Ryan Dwyer

*These are probably the most-sung lines in the last 300 years, so here are both the traditional words, and another variation:*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Praise God who loves us, great and small  
Praise God who hears our faintest call  
The Sovereign Lamb redeemed the fall  
Praise God the Savior, Lord of all.

Benediction and Blessing

Beloved in Christ, there is such a large crowd of witnesses all around us! So may we let go of everything that slows us down, even the sin that wraps us tight, so that we are unbound, and free to run the race before us. Go with the blessing of Jesus, so that the God of our ancestors may lead you into God's future. Amen and amen.

Choral Benediction

Choir

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,  
and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.  
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the field shall clap, shall clap their hands.  
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands,  
and you'll go out with joy.

Postlude

Ryan Dwyer

“When the Saints Go Marching In”

## Sermon Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> Eric F. Palmer in Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 4: Season After Pentecost 2.

<sup>[2]</sup> The Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber in a 2014 sermon, “Some Modern Beatitudes.”

<sup>[3]</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>[4]</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>[5]</sup> *ibid.*