



Sunday 1st November 2020

All Saint's Day

Call to Worship -

Give Thanks to the Lord for he is good

His Love endures forever.

Psalm 107:1

Hymn – StF 313, H&P 212, MP 689 Thine Be the Glory

Prayers of Praise and Confession -

How can we praise you in life's ordinary moments,
bus, car or train, pedestrian moments,
at home and employment, with all those distractions.
How can we praise you?

How can we praise you when time is so precious,
appointments and targets distracting our focus,
muddying waters made clean for your purpose.
How can we praise you?

How can we praise you? Through all of our actions,
a smile and a greeting, a shoulder to lean on,
a word in due season, love and compassion,
in all situations.

Creator God,

Forgive our moments of ingratitude,
the spiritual blindness that prevents us
from appreciating the wonder that is this world,
the endless cycle of nature,
of life and death and rebirth.

Forgive us for taking without giving,
reaping without sowing.

Open our eyes to see,
our lips to praise,
our hands to share.

May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread,
and our footsteps be worthy of following,
for they lead to you.

Amen

Old Testament Reading -
Joshua 3:7-17

Gospel Reading -
Matthew 23:1-12

Hymn – StF 465, H&P 437 MP 201 Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah

Reflection –

The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Mt 23:11-12

What does it mean to be great?

To be a great person, to be seen as great in the eyes of mankind.

Some would say it's about being an alpha male, confident, strong, in charge, someone who always knows what to say, and how to deal with things. The expensive suit, the gold watch, the suntan, the perfect hair, the finely shaped facial hair, of course then there's the sports car in the double driveway of a big house with all mod cons. The champagne lifestyle, parties, mixing with celebs and people of influence and power. Luxury yacht in the marina, hot sun, bleached white teeth, surgically sculpted bodies, fast cars, casinos in Monte Carlo, more gold, more jewels, more women. living a lifestyle that others envy, that others cry for and some fight for. Being great means being successful and having expensive material possessions means being powerful. By the standards of a society that prizes all these things above all else, anyone without them is a failure, a loser, to be looked down upon, even mocked. In which case the first century Jew called Jesus would definitely be considered a failure. He was from a carpenter's family, born in a stable,

his friends were fishermen and his country was occupied. He didn't rule anything. Apart from the clothes on his back he didn't really own anything, he relied on hospitality from his friends. When he did have the chance to show how powerful he was, he rode into town on a donkey, not a war horse, he didn't attend posh functions, he associated with publicans and sinners. He was arrested, abandoned, mocked, beaten, humiliated and nailed to a cross. It hardly sounds like an episode of 'Made in Chelsea' does it. It was an utter failure. But his life and sacrifice were the example of true Greatness.

From the beginning of that small movement in first century Israel, grew the largest religion on earth and two thousand years of people living lives inspired by Jesus, loving, serving, healing. Normal everyday people from everyday backgrounds, building churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, fighting for justice, living grace filled merciful, generous lives that spread through spirit led action, that infected the lives of others and enabled them to do the same.

Jesus tells us that to be great we must be like a servant and humble ourselves. The word for servant means 'one who kicks up dust'. I have always loved that image of someone kicking up the dust as they move around fetching and carrying, serving people's needs. We can kick up dust in many ways, you could say that Jesus kicked up the dust that had settled on ancient rules and regulations, he kicked up the dust that had settled on peoples lives, he kicked up the dust that had settled on peoples hearts. Washing away the settled, encrusted grime of prejudice, elitism, and cruelty with the water of life.

We need to do that, we need to uncover the lives of people who have been left in the dust, covered over by neglect and time. We need to love, heal, encourage and empower. Then we will be exalted, the word means to be lifted up. When we serve as Jesus served we are lifted up, raised with him from the consequences of death, to the joy of everlasting life. Raised from dark emptiness to the presence of the one true God, this is where true power comes from, this is the treasure that never rusts, this is the vibrant, exciting life that Jesus promises us. To be in God's presence, with others who have live in that perfect presence, together as a community of people saved, loved and valued, that is true greatness.

I'll take the Bible, prayer, and a spirit led community over a Ferrari any day.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession -

May your Church, built on the foundation of the saints, be faithful to the teaching of Christ so that it reflects his likeness. Lord, as you enkindle the flame of your love in the hearts of the saints, grant to our minds the same faith and power of love; that, as we rejoice in their triumphs, we may profit by their examples.

Lord, kindle the flame of your love in our hearts; in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for those who represent us in government. May they be men and women of integrity, guided by a desire for public service and a love of the truth. May they also be just and compassionate, so that we may be led in ways of righteousness and mercy.

Lord, kindle the flame of your love in our hearts; in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is darkness, light. Where there is sadness, joy. May we not so much seek to be consoled as to console, not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we awake to eternal life.

Lord, kindle the flame of your love in our hearts; in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, in the Garden of Gethsemane you shared with everyone who has ever been afraid. You conquered fear with love and returned saying 'Do not be afraid'. In the light of your love death has lost its sting, and so has fear. Lord, may your love be the key that releases us from suffering and fear.

Lord, kindle the flame of your love in our hearts; in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, give us grace to follow in the footsteps of the saints, as they followed in the footsteps of your holy Son. Keep alive in us the memory of those dear to ourselves whom you have called to yourself; and grant that every remembrance which turns our hearts from things seen to things unseen may lead us always upwards to you, until we come to our eternal rest.

Lord, kindle the flame of your love in our hearts; in your mercy, hear our prayer.

The Lord's Prayer...

Hymn -StF 545 H&P 378, MP 51 Be Thou My Vision,

We say the Grace together...

Dismissal -

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen.