Worship Resources for November 3rd—Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, All Saints Day

For those congregations that celebrate All Saints Day, I have included reflections on the text and some resources in addition to the regular weekly resources.

All Saints Day Readings: Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18; Psalm 149; Luke 6:20-31; Ephesians 1:11-23

Revised Common Lectionary: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4 or Isaiah 1:10-18; Psalm 119:137-144 or Psalm 32:1-7; Luke 19:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

For our readings for All Saints Day, we begin with a vision of four beasts by Daniel. Daniel was an interpreter of dreams and a prophet and yet he cannot interpret this vision without help. The four beasts represent four earthly kings and kingdoms, but that those who are faithful to God will receive the kingdom of heaven, where God reigns forever and ever. Psalm 149 sins of praise to God for being faithful to God’s people, but also calls upon judgment to those who have not been faithful and who have turned to earthly kings. Praises are given to God who reigns and not to worldly kings. Luke 6:20-31 shares Luke’s version of the Beatitudes; here, the Sermon on the Plain. In Luke’s version, there are blessings given to those who struggle for justice in this world, and woes given to those who are self-satisfying and do not look to the well-being of others. The passage concludes with how we ought to live in this life, blessing others and living as if we are blessed ourselves. Ephesians 1:11-23 contains a prayer and assurance that we belong to God, and that God reigns forever over all in Christ Jesus.

All Saints Day is a day of remembrance, to recall the loved ones lost over the past year, to collectively remember the faithfulness of God in life and death, and that there is a vision of the future with hope, with God’s reign enduring forever.

For the Revised Common Lectionary, the first selection is repeated from the alternative reading on October 6. Habakkuk desires for the people to move away from the law, because they are not following it, and instead moving to vision to direct their steps. Vision will guide them into hope and into life, for there is still time to turn to God’s ways. If the law won’t do it, the people have to look to vision to lead them and to live by faith.

Isaiah 1:10-18 shares the prophet’s vision of God’s view of the world. The people are more concerned with celebrating and having festivals than they are with caring for their fellow people. God despises the lavish celebrations and instead desires justice for the poor, the oppressed, the widowed and the orphaned. If the people return to God and God’s ways, God will forget their sins. God invites the people to “argue it out,” knowing that God will win the argument and turn their hearts back.

Psalm 119:137-144 contains a portion of this long psalm about being faithful to God’s ways even when those around us are not. Following God’s ways brings joy and delight, and give meaning to life.

Psalm 32:1-7 speaks of the freedom that forgiveness brings. In order to be forgiven, however, the psalmist had to acknowledge their sin. But God not only forgives, God is faithful and remains faithful.

Luke 19:1-10 tells the story of Zacchaeus. We are missing part of the story—it seems that Jesus and Zacchaeus have met before, and that Zacchaeus has changed his life because of his encounter with Jesus, and that others do not see the change that Zacchaeus has gone through. Zacchaeus, meaning “innocent” or “clean” may be a story to tell us that what doesn’t seem acceptable, clean or pure to us may be to God. This story, however, clearly shows us that Jesus delighted in people who were seen as despicable by others. And what makes someone despicable is not always what they do, but the fact that we look for something to despise others by. The people didn’t believe that Zacchaeus had changed because then they would have to change their minds. We don’t know what Zacchaeus was like before, but Jesus clearly liked him in this moment, and Zacchaeus has become a generous person. Perhaps he was despised because of his generosity to the poor rather than to his other neighbors. We do not know, but we know that Jesus rejoiced and declared that salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus.

2 Thessalonians is a letter most scholars agree must be pseudonymous, as much of the letter is exactly the same as 1 Thessalonians and parts of it contradict itself with the first letter. However, this first part contains a blessing and words of encouragement through prayer. When we love one another, we witness the love of the church with one another and our faithfulness.

For all the Saints, we remember their faithfulness, we remember how they have witnessed to us and with us, and we are encouraged to live our lives in faithfulness. Habakkuk encourages us to be faithful to God’s vision, and Isaiah reminds us to be faithful to God’s ways over worldly ways. Worldly ways call us to judge, to despise, even to hate; God’s ways call us to love, to welcome and embrace, to love and forgive. When we look at the witness of those who have gone before us, we remember their love and faithfulness, and are called to live into the same way, the same vision from God for life now, and eternity.

Call to Worship:

Great Creator, You made us in Your image

**Help us to live into the fullness of Your image in our lives**

Holy Spirit, You reflect Your image in us

**Call us to love our neighbors as ourselves**

Loving Christ, You teach us that Your image is within us

**Keep us to Your ways of love, justice, and faithfulness**

In this time of worship, may we rejoice that You are always present

**You are here, now, forever, with us. Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Spirit of Life, we come acknowledging that we have turned away from the lives of others to our own selfish gain. We have abandoned a future together for quick successes here and now. We have become shortsighted, looking to our own desires and ignoring the needs of others. Call us away from the temptation of the world and bring us back to a fulfilling life, a life in which we live for others, for You, and live out Your call on our lives. In the name of Jesus, the Life who is the Light of all people. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

Know that if you must fall, fall on the side of love. Open your hearts to others and receive grace and forgiveness, knowing that God loves you, and you are important and needed by God. God will continue to fall on the side of love for you, as Christ went to the cross with the love of the world. You are forgiven. You are beloved by God. Amen.

Prayer

Amazing and Wondrous God, You continue to shed new light on the vision for our lives, the vision that guides us into a life of hope and joy. Draw us out of the darkness where all we see are shadows that confuse us. Keep us to the hope of vision and to trust in Your faithfulness when the world seems dark and bound to disorient us. Guide us away from the world’s false light that shines around us but doesn’t help us move forward, that holds us to where we are; instead, help us to grow and journey with You in Your light, for You are the Light of the World, the Life of All People, and Your light will always shine in the darkness to guide our way. In the name of Jesus, who is the Light of the World, we pray. Amen.

All Saints Day Litany (for Communion)

We gather at this table, God’s table

The table has been set long before we were born

There are places for all who have gone before us

We take their hands as we approach to be received

You are welcome at this table, Christ’s table

The faithful ones are gathered with us from all generations

We lift up the memories of loved ones we no longer see

We open our hearts to the presence of loved ones who are with God, for God is present with us

This is the table of reconciliation, of forgiveness, of restoration

This is the table for all the saints of God.

Come, for all things are ready.