

Daniel 7: 1-3, 15-18
Psalm 149
Ephesians 1: 11-23
St. Luke 6: 20-31

All Saints' Day 2022 (transferred)

“Having the eyes of your heart enlightened... you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...”

Ephesians 1: 18

We've likely often seen movie scenes when a character has died, and the family gathers in the lawyer's office to learn who has inherited parts of the estate. There is often anticipation; and sometimes, greed and disappointment. Here is an example from the 1988 film, *Rain Man*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dODfA5kyeyM>

When we are Christians, we receive a share in, or are “inheritors” of the kingdom of God. In our natural families, we receive an inheritance when someone else has died. In our *adopted* family – that is, as we are Christians united in the universal Church of God – we inherit a share in God's kingdom since *Jesus Christ* has died... We begin to receive this inheritance as we live for Christ now. One glorious, amazing day, we shall know the fullness of this inheritance after we ourselves experience physical death, and are perfectly united with God and all the faithful for ever... We receive our Christian inheritance through the perfect work of Jesus Christ... Christians receive a spiritual inheritance, and a share in the kingdom of God...

Today, we tend to think of “saints” as particularly holy people of faith – or more generally, particularly virtuous people. In the rural area where I grew up, some older people would give a complement by saying, “You're such a saint...” What's come to happen now is that we sometimes associate “saints” as a sub-class of the Christian community. Today, saints are often thought of as particularly virtuous people of faith...

That perception is unfortunate: When we are aware of our own foibles and our sins, we know we have such a long way to go. We might think, “I could never be one of *those people* – I could never be a saint...”

We aren't made saints by our own efforts and striving. Rather, we are *made to be saints* only by God. The Church doesn't “make” saints. The Church recognizes particularly amazing Christians. Only God alone knows exactly who has inherited his kingdom. We can be assured, though, that the number of the faithful is far greater than we can count.

Today, near the beginning of November, we are observing “All Saints' Day.” We're celebrating the breadth of God's kingdom, which is wider than we will ever know. By the grace of God, we can be humbly confident that we are included among the faithful...

Are we getting the idea that, “in our Father’s house are many dwelling-places”? Being a “saint” is not some impossible standard which we can only admire. With the help of the Holy Spirit, each one of us can be inheritors of the kingdom of God...

What does scripture say? The later Jewish writings understood that the entire congregation were saints – or at least, saints in the making. Today’s psalm begins, “Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.”

Or as the Prayer Book translation puts it, “O sing to the Lord a new song: Let the congregation of saints praise him.”

Today’s first reading makes the link that the faithful – the saints – will inherit God’s kingdom: “But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever—for ever and ever’ (Daniel 7: 18).

In Ephesians 1, Paul begins by addressing the entire congregation as “saints” – “To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus...” Paul goes on to write, “Having the eyes of your heart enlightened... you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...”

Time and again the Book of Revelation addresses *all* the faithful. For example, Revelation 14: 12-13:

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.’

The Anglican Catechism begins this way,

Q: Who gave you [your] name?

A: My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

We start on our way with our baptisms...

The B.A.S. baptism liturgy which we most often use today includes this prayer:

Anoint [those to be baptized] with your Holy Spirit and bring them to new birth in the family of your Church, that they may become inheritors of your glorious kingdom...

So, this wonderful inheritance and a share in God's kingdom isn't just for a few amazing people. Let's consider that we too can share in God's amazing gifts. As it says in the Creed, "we believe... in the communion of saints..." (Comm-union – we are united with all the saints.)

We can learn a lot of the heroes of the Church, both past and present. I encourage us to read biographies of the recognized saints – not that they are *perfect* people, but it's beyond dispute that they shine with the light of the Lord Jesus...

The saints who have gone before us, what are they doing? They're praying for us. Prayers make a difference in God's world. Can't we use all the help we can get? Let's be grateful for the prayers of others, and let's pray as well, for all those in need...

I hope that we do not view the recognized saints as having an impossible standard of faith and life which we will never reach. It isn't that they are so very *different* – rather, they are so much like us. All the saints faced temptations and failures, as well as glorious successes. With the help of the Spirit, as they are, so we can become – all to God's greater glory, and for the salvation of the world; now and for ever.

Amen.