

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

7 November 2021

All Saints' Day

CALL TO WORSHIP

Be glad, because of your Creator;
rejoice, because of your king!
Praise His name with dancing;
play drums and harps in praise of Him.

HYMN: MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PEACE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihvm6eLWZI>

OPENING PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Lord our God, we gather again to worship and praise You.
For You are the creator who inspires our wonder.
You are the King who deserves our service.

What can we do for You, Lord God Almighty?
How can we respond to Your kindness towards us?

No gift could ever be enough to repay Your love
No present can do justice to the many good things You do;
the many good things You give. We can but praise You
with rejoicing voices and with a silent praise from our
hearts.

A moment of silence

**All: Most gentle God, we confess that we do not always
feel like praising You. We lose sight of Your wonder
in ordinary places and we forget Your goodness
when times are hard.**

**Forgive us when we say or do things that do not
make You and Your people happy. Lead us gently
onwards, to brighter and to better places, where we
can regain a vision of Your glory.**

**Also help us to praise You with the music of worship
and with the music of our lives. We offer these and
all our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who
taught us to pray together, saying,**

Our Father in Heaven...

BIBLE READING: 'ZACCHAEUS' (LUKE 19:1-10)

REFLECTION: 'MADE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD'

Monday was All Saints' Day – the day many Christians have set aside to celebrate Saints in their lives – both living and dead. We forget the the Bible calls us Christians, Saints – 52 times more than it calls us Christians. There is a correlation between Jesus and saints. Just as we cannot talk meaningfully about the size of a human brain without mentioning intelligence or even to dare to exclude rain in any conversation on Scotland, **one can also not talk about saints without mentioning Jesus Christ.** Also, our reflection on saints or sainthood necessarily points to **ordinary people**, like you and me, who have sprung into new life, following a meaningful encounter with Jesus Christ.

Evidently, not everyone who has encountered Jesus, in one way or another, has had a positive change in life. Not everyone did – many

Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees did not change their lifestyle after their encounters with Jesus. But many did, many still do - and the Bible calls us followers of Christ, Christians or saints. **In fact, the Bible calls us saints, more times than it calls us Christians.** It also does not call people saints because they have special gifts or have led a saintly, fruitful or even successful lives. Their lives before and after coming to Christ might have been marked by series of failures. But they are still called saints because they follow (or followed) Christ through thick and thin. Saints are simply those who love God, listen to His son Jesus Christ, accept the new life He gives and follow Him. At the risk of sounding controversial, I suggest that Christ's followers don't become saints in the next life. They – you and I – are saints, here are now and right through to eternity – not because of who we are, but because of what Christ did for us on the cross at Calvary.

In our scripture reading, we heard the story of Zacchaeus and his relentless goal catch a glimpse of Jesus. Zacchaeus refused to allow anything, including his short stature, to stand in the way of his search for Jesus.

We learn from Zacchaeus' own confession in our Gospel reading today, that he was not an honest man. At least some of the taxes he collected went straight into his own pocket. Worse still, Zacchaeus collected taxes from fellow Jews, for the occupying power in Rome – thus making him, at least in eyes of fellow Jewish people around him, a fraudster, thief and traitor. As one man noted, 'because Zacchaeus collected taxes for Rome, he also unavoidably collected many enemies'. That is why those around him would not give him a good place on the ground, even on the roadside, to see Jesus, as He walked passed through Jericho.

But Zacchaeus still wanted to see Jesus! It seems to me he was in such a bad and lonely state that needed to see

Jesus, or better still, to meet Him. He wanted to meet the only one man whom, I guess from the stories he had had about him, who would not turn him away or turn his back on him.

So, Zacchaeus climbed a tree, as children did during his time. He probably he was up on that tree together with so many children; children who also wanted to see Jesus. It was only up, on a tree that Zacchaeus could see Jesus. **So, he climbed up to see Jesus. However, it was not Zacchaeus who saw Jesus, but it was Jesus who 'looked up [saw him] and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down now" (Luke 19:5).**

Sadly, there are also people all around us who are 'forced to climb up trees' to find hope, to get help, to be noticed, or to see Jesus. Unfortunately, those around them are too busy to notice them 'up on their own trees' or even 'up on our own trees'.

- May the Lord bring to our prayers 'the Zacchaeuses' of our day who are forced, even because of their own faults, to 'climb up on trees' to find hope and meaning in life or to meet with Jesus and receive the new life He gives freely to all.
- May God also bring to our attention the 'blind Bartimaeuses' among us who have to cry out, "Jesus, Son of David have pity on me" (Mark 10:46-52)
- May the Lord bring to our prayers those around us who, like Jairus a religious leader, had to kneel at the feet of Jesus, pleading with Him to come lay His hands on his only young daughter, who was near death (Mark 5:21-43).
- May the Lord help us to create space for the 'Nicodemuses' around us who have to go to Jesus in the night, because they are too afraid to seek Him during the day (John 3:1-21).
- May all who look for Jesus, in one way all another, in our day, find from us and through us a readiness to step up, step aside or to even step back so they might see Jesus directly, in us or through us.
- Lastly, may God Almighty grant us courage, strength, grace and mercy to step away, aside or up so others might meet Jesus and receive the forgiveness and new life He gives, Amen.

PRAYER

We thank You Lord God, for the saints who've touched our own lives: parents and grandparents, Sunday school teachers and youth leaders, who told us the story of Your love. Help us to fulfil our own calling today, by inspiring and encouraging those who come after us. As the people of Your Church, may we keep on growing in love for You, and in love for others – the neighbours You have given.

We now bring our prayers, trusting that Your love can flow down through us. Help us to transform a difficult, hurting and troubled world and to bring healing in places of pain.

We pray for our own community ... bringing to you friends, at homes, in nursing homes, care homes or hospitals who are not well. We pray for the wider world, remembering that neighbours can be near or far – wherever people cry out in need. We bring our country and many others in prayer as we continue to battle an invisible enemy.

Now, in a moment of quietness we bring You our personal prayers, commending to Your love and care any who are in our thoughts this day. We call to mind the names and faces of our loved ones; we think of those, whom we do not know, but whose stories concern us.

As we pray in quietness, fill us with love for all Your people, and help them to know that they are remembered in prayer. Again, a moment of silence, we remember those whom we have known, who are no longer here beside us. In faith we trust that they are at peace with You, knowing the fullness of Your love and the light of Your love.

Keep us sure that we too are embraced by Your eternal love and that we will be united with You when our service is complete. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is risen, ascended and at home with You. Amen

CLOSING HYMN: FOR ALL THE SAINTS FROM WHOM THEIR LABOUR REST

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7y-yvL2P_FY

BLESSING

May Christ who makes saints of sinners, who has transformed those we remember today, raise and strengthen us that we may transform the world.

May God give to us and to all those we love His comfort and His peace, His light and His joy, in this world and the next.