

I speak to you in the name of God — the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I want to begin now with our reading from the Book of Daniel. Daniel was a faithful follower of God, living far from home but holding tight to his faith in a foreign land. He was known for his honesty & insight, & God gave him dreams that showed how God is in control of all things — nations, kings, and even time itself.

And so Daniel has a dream. But it's not the kind of dream that brings peace. Daniel sees the sea — wild, roaring, & chaotic. And then, out of the sea, he sees *beasts rise* — strange, terrifying creatures, each one more powerful than the last: devouring, dominating, & ruling the earth.

And so Daniel wakes up *troubled in spirit*. And of course he is — seeing into the heart of a world out of control, where kingdoms crush the weak, & evil appears to reign unchecked.

But now, hold that thought, & in the same spirit, let's turn to Luke's Gospel. Here Jesus looks out on a crowd of poor, hungry, grief-filled people. And he says to them, "*Blessed are the poor, blessed are the hungry, blessed are those who mourn...*"

Now, by all appearances, there is no sign of blessing on these people. They live in pain, & bear all the signs of being accursed. It's as though the beasts of Daniel's dream have taken new shapes — & hunger, grief, & poverty roam & prowl the earth. Like the people in the time of Daniel, the crowd listening to Jesus lived between God's promise and their present reality.

And that brings us to the world today. You see, we may not see beasts rising from the sea, but the news is filled with images that break our hearts.

This is a world in which blessings belong to the rich, to the powerful, & to the ones who seem never to grieve.

It is a world in which wars, violence, & hatred takes root & even flourishing in some places.

Families fleeing their homes. Children living in constant fear, denied any semblance of “childhood,” filled up with painful memories they pray to forget.

And we see the planet itself groaning. Wild fires & floods remind us that there is a cost to enjoying Creation without also heeding God’s call to nurture it.

And then, of course, we have our very own personal stories of loss & heart break — grief that we acknowledge today on All Saints/All Souls, as we remember those who we love but see no longer. Their absences leave empty places in our homes, & our hearts aching.

So when Jesus says, “Blessed are you who weep now,” we may nod hopefully but, like Daniel, we are left figuring out what he means. *Where is God in all this chaos? Where is the kingdom we’ve been promised?*

And then comes the angel’s voice to Daniel:
“But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom & possess it forever.”

The beasts may rise, but they do not last. Empires rise & fall, but the promises of God last forever. That's what Paul means when he writes to the Ephesians: God has already "placed everything under Christ's feet."

The battle is not uncertain — we don't live in hope that Christ will rise victorious. God has already won. And the church, Paul says — you & I & all of those who have come before & will come after us are *the risen Body of Christ*.

The same power that overcomes evil & darkness raised Jesus from the dead & that same power is *at work in us*.

And so Jesus' words on the plain: "Blessed are you who are poor, you who are hungry, you who are mourning, you who the world hates" — these are not empty words: they are a revelation. This is how God sees things. It is a truth hidden from ordinary eyes. And what Jesus reveals here is that those who are ignored & forgotten in this world are remembered in God's kingdom. Those who are lost are found. And those who are weak bear nothing less than the very power of God.

The saints we honour today — some lived boldly, others quietly. But they all lived this same truth, bearing witness in their words & deeds that love is stronger than death, & that grace can bloom even in suffering.

So now, my dear saints of Christ's Church — & yes, if you were wondering about the question posted before the service — this day is not just about remembering those who have gone before. It's about remembering *who we are*.

We are ALL a part of that same communion of saints — saints above and saints below — "one great cloud of

witnesses.” And when we gather at the Lord’s Table, we join with them in Christ’s presence.

It is the sacraments of baptism & Holy Communion — “visible signs of invisible grace” — that bring together heaven & earth — and it is in these acts that we catch a glimpse of what Daniel saw: the kingdom that shall never pass away.

And so, in commemorating All Saints & All Souls, we are not celebrating just the perfected souls — we celebrate *belonging*. You see, the saints were *not flawless*. But *they were faithful*. And *being faithful* is what holiness looks like in real life.

So today, we’re invited to live as saints-in-the-making.
To bless, even when it hurts.

To forgive, even when it’s costly.

And to love, even when it seems foolish.

Because the beasts of this world that range & devour the poor & vulnerable will not have the last word.

It is the Lamb that will prevail at last. And the word he speaks is life.

So let us stand firm in the hope of our calling. Let us live as those who know how the story ends: that the holy ones of God shall receive the kingdom & enjoy it forever. And so, I’d say three hallelujahs are in order — because those holy ones are *us*. Thanks be to God. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Amen.