

Sunday 1 November – All Saints Day

Sermon by Christine Newmarch

An audio recording of the sermon from St Luke's will be available after the service at [Sermons \(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk\)](http://Sermons(tk-tiptree-braxted-benefice.org.uk))

Today we celebrate All Saints' Day. It is a major festival of the church when we give thanks for all the saints who have gone before us, the examples they have set us and the inspiration they give us too.

This church is named for St Luke, and there have been great celebrations here for our patronal festival and the 170th anniversary of this building.

Maybe you are named after a saint? A saint's name might be your middle name, or even in your surname. If so, do you ever think about that saint, what they were like or how their life might influence yours?

Would anyone like to say anything about the saint they are named after?

If not, maybe it is something you might like to think about when you go home.

In France it has long been a tradition to celebrate your name day, and it has traditionally been more important for many than their birthday, though sadly the practice is beginning to dwindle now.

Saints are not just the men and women we see in stained glass windows. They were real people like us.

Paul opened his first letter to the Corinthians like this:

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

And when writing to the Philippians he again wrote:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Saints are not just those who were canonised long ago, but everyone, all of us who seek to be closer to God, and being dead is not a prerequisite!

The Common Worship 'Saints on Earth' tells us that Paul uses the word 'saint' extensively to refer to his fellow believers. It is about living or doing our best to live in Christ.

The Beatitudes which we heard just now describes different ways of being in Christ, and the short passage from the first letter of John celebrates the love we receive as God's children. It is not just some love, but he writes:

'What great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

It is easy to rush over these words, but they are staggering in their enormity.

John goes on to describe a vision for the future. It is known as the Beatific Vision.

Beatific means being marked by complete, serene and celestial happiness.

He is saying that there will be a time when we shall see God in Christ face to face, and that we shall be transformed into his likeness and character.

John then tells us that all who have this hope in him, meaning having hope in Jesus, purify themselves, just as he is pure.

This is a more than a wish, it is about having a firm hope, which makes a real difference in our lives here on earth.

Such hope calls us all, individually and collectively, to consider how we might move towards that greater purity which Jesus longs to offer.

It encourages us to make better, more Christ-like decisions day to day, and in so doing purifying our hearts in this life.

This brings us back to the Beatitudes, and the promise that 'blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Amen.