



All Saints

Sunday
November 3rd, 2024

Pilgrimage towards Heaven

All our hope on God is
grounded



St Peter's by the Lake
PAYNESVILLE
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



Breaking Open the Word

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

READINGS

Wisdom 3.1-9 or

Psalm 24.1-6

Revelation 21.1-6a

John 11.32-44

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

Introduction

Sermon

1

Discussion Questions

Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

O Almighty God,
who hast knit together thine elect
in one communion and fellowship,
in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord:
Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints
in all virtuous and godly living,
that we may come to those unspeakable joys,
which thou hast prepared for them
that unfeignedly love thee:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In his sermon, Dennis encourages the congregation to look beyond the commercialisation of Halloween and focus on the spiritual significance of All Saints and All Souls.

The sermon speaks about the comforting promise of eternal life, emphasising that those who have passed are secure in God's loving hands.

Drawing upon the readings, he illustrates the hope that death is not an end but a gateway to peace, where we can look forward to reuniting with loved ones in Christ.

Dennis highlights that God's care offers a sense of unity and belonging, reinforcing the idea that hope transcends hardship and strengthens our bonds despite earthly struggles.

Moving deeper into the theme, Dennis references biblical passages, particularly the story of Lazarus, to illustrate Jesus as the embodiment of resurrection. He describes how Jesus calls forth Lazarus, demonstrating Jesus' power over death. Jesus' prayer serves as a reminder of his unity with the Father, encouraging believers to have complete faith and understanding of God's purpose.

Ultimately, Dennis invites the congregation to live with the hope of reunion, suggesting practical preparations for the future while firmly grounding their hope in Christ, who promises to make all things new.

This hopeful message is a call to embrace God's love and the certainty of life beyond this one.

Prayer 🙏

- Ask for prayer requests from your community
- Pray for the strength to live in hope and comfort others in their grief.
- Ask God to remind us of the promises of eternal life throughout the week.
- Seek guidance in preparing our hearts and minds for reunion in Christ.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

Looking past the ever-growing commercialism that is Hallowe'en, during All Saints and All Souls, we turn our hearts and minds toward the promise of eternal life. With this hope, we bring those who have gone before us to mind as we reflect on the rich message in our readings. In the readings, we hear a promise of God's love that transcends death and speaks of a future where all are united in Christ. This hope, our anchor, is for both now and the world to come.

The Souls of the Righteous in God's Hands

There is no doubt that there is beautiful poetry and imagery in Wisdom 3. It is a profound comfort to all who grieve. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God," it says, and this divine care is more significant than any sorrow. Some in the world might view death as an end, but in God, death is a gateway to peace and rest. Those who have gone before us are not lost or distant; they are in God's loving hands, sheltered and secure. Remembering them is not about

looking backwards in loss but forward in hope, knowing that we will one day be reunited in Christ.

In wisdom, we hear the words of a deep and comforting promise: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them." There is the reminder of the psalmist that God holds each of us close, gathering us into a peace that lasts beyond this life. There is a gentle sense that all who turn to God in hope are united and drawn into a shared place of rest and safety.

God's care is described with beautiful imagery: the faithful are like gold refined in fire, their lives a precious offering to God. Our struggles become part of a larger story that brings us closer to God and one another. God's love draws us into unity, caring for each of us individually while making us part of something greater—a community, a family of hope that cannot be broken.

Hope comes alive as we face challenges, knowing we are never

alone. Hope means that our hardships have a purpose and our lives are held in a love that goes beyond anything we can imagine. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding. Even as we walk through difficult times, we are lifted by a shared strength connected by faith and God's love. Wisdom encourages us to live with hope now, trusting that each of us has a place in God's hands and is united in divine care. With this in mind, we are moving closer to a renewed and made-whole world. Hope strengthens us to comfort one another, live with kindness, and look forward to a future where God's love makes all things new.

The Promise of a New Creation

Psalm 24 declares that "the earth is the Lord's and all who dwell in it." God is sovereign over life and death. Whether we are living or departed, God has prepared a place for those who seek the Holy with "clean hands and a pure heart." A new creation is described in Revelation 21, where John's vision reveals a future without pain or death. God's kingdom is where every tear will be wiped away, and we will dwell in perfect unity in the eternal banquet prepared for us in heaven. This is the world to come: a life beyond life, where our loved ones await and

where we, too, will one day share in the promise of Christ's resurrection.

Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life

In John 11, we witness Jesus approaching the tomb of Lazarus, embodying the promise of resurrection. Martha, Mary, and Thomas each show faith in Jesus' teaching but with hesitancy—an "almost, but not quite" belief. They knew that Jesus could perform miracles, yet death felt final, immovable. Jesus meets their incomplete faith by calling Lazarus back to life, demonstrating that He is truly "the resurrection and the life."

When Jesus later declares, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," he affirms that he is not simply a teacher or healer but the one who restores all creation, bringing us back from the power of sin and death. Jesus's hope is not the temporary restoration of a political Israel, as some had hoped, but a far greater renewal—the restoration of humanity's relationship with God. This spiritual kingdom transcends earthly borders and politics.

Jesus' Prayer of Unity and Assurance

As Jesus approaches the tomb of Lazarus, he is deeply moved—not only by the loss of his friend but also by the sorrow and unbelief surrounding him. Despite the faith of Martha, Mary, and others who had come to mourn, their hope seems limited. They see Jesus as someone who can help and heal, but death feels like a boundary, even if he cannot cross. This response brings a sense of distress to Jesus, and even though we use the one word for tears and weeping, the text offers a slight difference. Whilst the mourners openly weep, Jesus is moved to tears through frustration. Jesus yearns for them to understand the fullness of who he is—the Son who is one with the Father, holding power over life and death.

As Jesus stands there, he is the living presence of God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel—the One who has led His people through every darkness brought life where there was none, and is faithful through all generations. As such, he carries the same authority and life-giving power, ready to show that death does not have the final word. In calling Lazarus back to life, Jesus reveals that life flows from his unity with the Father.

This moment is marked by contrast. The wailing of the sisters and mourners reflects the heartbreak and despair of losing someone dear. Yet, Jesus calls for faith beyond grief, for hope that

extends past earthly life. He seeks to show them love and power that transforms sorrow, turning their eyes from the depths of loss to the glory of God. This glory of God brings life from death and offers unity and peace to all who believe. Through the divine words and actions, Jesus opens the way to a faith that sees God’s power not only in healing but in the resurrection, a faith that promises that, in Him, there is no end.

Before Jesus calls Lazarus forth, He prays aloud, saying, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me.” This prayer is not for God’s benefit but for the gathered people. As he prays this, he reminds them that Jesus and the Father are one. In saying this for their benefit, the prayer gently corrects Martha, Mary, and Thomas, calling them to a more profound belief. Jesus reveals that our hope in God is not partial or tentative but complete. He and the Father are united in purpose and power. At the heart of this is the essence of atonement—being “at one” with God through Christ.

Living with the Hope of Reunion

Today, as we remember those who have gone before, we hold them in the light of this promise. Death does not sever our connection; instead, it deepens our hope for the day when we are fully united in Christ’s life. We

remember that God holds our loved ones, waiting until we, too, are drawn into the fullness of divine love.

Pastoral Reminder

In this hope, it is also wise to prepare ourselves responsibly. Reviewing our wills, powers of attorney, and funeral arrangements annually is a practice of caring for those we love and our peace of mind. Just as we prepare our hearts in faith, let us carefully prepare for our loved ones who will be tasked with celebrating our life journey. A

planning guide has been placed on the Parish website, or if you prefer, a hard copy will soon be available. It contains all the details that funeral directors will require to assist in completing legal requirements.

We find unshakable hope in the promise of Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. May this hope sustain us as we remember our loved ones and look forward to the day when, in Christ, all things will be made new. Amen.



Discussion Questions

What does it mean when the sermon says, 'The souls of the righteous are in God's hand'?

- This phrase emphasises the comforting idea that those who have passed away are cared for by God, which can help us understand death differently.
- How can this perspective change how you view loss in your life?

How can we find hope in difficult times, as mentioned in the sermon, especially when facing challenges?

- The sermon states that hope means our hardships have purpose and that God's love supports us through struggles.
- Can you imagine a personal experience where hope helped you overcome a challenging situation?

In what ways do you think God's promise of a new creation, as described in Revelation 21, can impact how we live our lives today?

- The sermon discusses a future without pain or death, and living with that hope can influence our actions and mindset.
- How might this promise encourage you to treat others or engage with the world around you?

What lesson about faith can. Sus's interactions with Martha, Mary, and Thomas after Lazarus's learning from Jesus?

- The sermon shows that Jesus calls for deeper faith and understanding, even when people feel overwhelmed by loss.
- How can you work on strengthening your faith during challenging times?

Why is it essential to prepare for the future regarding our lives and those of our loved ones, as discussed in the sermon?

- The sermon encourages responsible planning to care for family and friends, which is a loving way to prepare for eventual loss.
- What steps can you take to ensure that you and your loved ones are prepared for the future?

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This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. We will explore themes of hope, unity, and God's eternal love as we remember those who have gone before us and look forward to the promise of resurrection in Christ.



Day 1

- **Wisdom 3:1-3** As we begin this devotional journey, we reflect on the promise that "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God." This reminder is a profound comfort during times of grief and loss. In a world that often views death as a finality, we are called to see it as a gateway to peace and eternal life in Christ. As we remember our loved ones, we do so in hope, understanding that they are not lost but are safe in God's loving care. This hope brings us together as a community of faith, encouraging us to support one another as we navigate our journeys of loss and love.
- As we engage with this scripture, we can cultivate a mindset of hope and expectation. Just as God holds our loved ones, He also holds us in His hands. May we seek to live out this hope actively, reflecting on how God's care encompasses our struggles and lifts us in our times of need.
- Our challenges become opportunities to experience God's love and kindness as we unite in faith.
 - *What does knowing that your loved ones are in God's hands mean to you?*
 - *How can you support others in your community who are grieving?*
 - *In what ways can you cultivate hope in your daily life?*
 - *Pray for the comfort of God to envelop those who are mourning.*
 - *Reflect on a time when you felt God's presence during a difficult time.*

Day 2

- **Psalms 24:1-2** Today, we reflect on the sovereignty of God over all creation as we consider that "the earth is the Lord's and all who dwell in it." This scripture invites us to remember that God's plans and purposes encompass us whether we are living or departed. Through Christ, we hold on to the promise of a new creation where pain and suffering have no place. This vision ignites a longing to look forward to unity in God's kingdom, where every tear is wiped away, and we will gather in eternal

communion with those we love.

- As we meditate on this promise, let it instil a renewed sense of purpose and hope within us. In every hardship we face, we are reminded that God is preparing a place for us where our struggles will be transformed into testimonies of His faithfulness. We are part of a divine narrative that extends beyond our earthly lives, calling us to live with intention and love.
 - *How does knowing you belong to God's creation change your perspective on life?*
 - *What do you think it means to have a "pure heart", as referred to in this psalm?*
 - *How can you embody hope in your interactions with others?*
 - *Pray for those who have not yet encountered the promise of Christ's resurrection.*
 - *Reflect on the ways God has worked in your life to shape your testimony.*

Day 3

- **John 11:25-26** On this day, we explore the powerful declaration of Jesus when He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." We see how Jesus brings hope and the context of loss restoration. The story of Lazarus teaches us that death does not hold the final word; instead, Jesus brings resurrection and life. As He calls Lazarus from the tomb, he demonstrates the profound truth that in Him, we experience a love that conquers death and connects us to the heart of God. This revelation invites us to deepen our faith beyond what we can see, recognising that God's promises extend into eternity.
- In times of sorrow, we are called to embrace the hope that Jesus offers, knowing He is the pathway to overcoming all fears and doubts surrounding us. Let this be a reminder that even in our struggles, God is working out a great strength in us, preparing us for the renewed life that awaits.
 - *In what areas of your life do you need to declare that Jesus is your hope?*
 - *How do you find strength in knowing that Jesus is the resurrection?*
 - *What fears do you need to surrender to God today?*
 - *Pray for a deeper understanding of Christ's resurrection power in your life.*
 - *Reflect on how Jesus has brought you back from difficult times in your own life.*

Day 4

- **Revelation 21:4** As we reflect on the promises of a new creation, we look to Revelation, where it is proclaimed that "God will wipe away every tear."

This promise offers hope to our weary hearts as we confront the realities of loss. It paints a picture of the divine banquet, a joyous assembly of those who have persevered in faith. The assurance of a world where pain, mourning, and death are no longer present brings comfort and restores our faith in God's ultimate plan for humanity. Living in this truth empowers us to be agents of hope in a world that often feels heavy with sorrow. We are called not just to wait for the future but to make impacts today, cultivating kindness and understanding while being a light to those around us. Through our actions, we embody the love of God, reflecting the hope that is yet to come.

- *What does the promise of a new creation mean to you personally?*
- *How can you prepare yourself and others for the joy of that promise?*
- *What role does hope play in your daily life?*
- *Pray about how you can be a source of comfort to others who are struggling.*
- *Reflect on the blessings you have experienced that affirm God's goodness.*

Day 5

- **Matthew 5:4** Finally, we embrace the beatitude, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." This powerful reminder invites us to recognise that our pain does not go unnoticed by God. Instead, through our mourning, we draw closer to Him and discover a deeper understanding of divine comfort. As we gather to remember our loved ones, we hold onto the promise that God meets us in our sorrow and transforms it into hope. Preparing ourselves for the journey ahead is essential. Just as we take steps to care for others, we must consider our legacies and the impact we leave behind. This practical preparation is rooted in faith, shaped by our love for those we cherish, and demonstrates our collective hope in Christ's resurrection. Our planning reflects a commitment to continuity of love that binds us even beyond the grave.
 - *How have you experienced God's comfort in your grief?*
 - *What steps can you take to care for your loved ones?*
 - *How can you celebrate the lives of those you remember today?*
 - *Pray for peace as you reflect on your journey of loss and hope.*
 - *Consider how your actions and decisions can reflect God's promise to you.*

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina:

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(2023). PVAMU National Alumni Association All Faiths Chapel - July 1994. <https://core.ac.uk/download/578746551.pdf>

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