Sermon for All Saints day 1st November 2026 - Mike

Attached are photo's of some representatives of the Saints who have worshipped at St Stephen's over the past 50 years. Of course there were thousands before them and there will be many more in the future.

We are the saints of this generation. We may not be what we imagine saints to be we are influenced by the term saintly which has grown out of a different definition of the term saint.

If we look up the meaning of the word there are 3 different types of definition –

The everyday, Informal Use term: In casual speech, a saint is a living person who shows extreme patience, selflessness, or kindness.

Religious Title: In Christianity, a saint is a deceased person formally honored or **canonized** by a church for living a remarkably holy life or displaying heroic virtue.

Biblical / General Christian Usage: In the New Testament, "saint" simply means a believer set apart for God's purposes—meaning all active Christians can be viewed as saints.

That is where we and these folk in the pictures sit as Saints working on our relationships with God.

In the first reading we heard today there was a word picture painted of those who are close to God, from the book or revelation, what is considered to be Apocalyptic writing.

Here too the meaning of the word apocalyptic has changed over the years and in translation, originally the meaning was to **unveil** or **reveal** something. So we need to be wary of just thinking of the modern meaning of apocalyptic meaning ruin doom and collapse of civilization.

John the divine, the writer, sees a vast crowd that no one can number, drawn from every nation, tribe, people, and language, a global family united not by culture or geography, but by God's grace, God's gift.

He gives us a wonderfully multi-ethnic and multi-language image of what is to come, holding on to the distinct cultures, no one race or tradition being singled out a part of their shared worship of the Christ.

John the divine was living through the Roman persecution of Christians himself being imprisoned and exiled. The first readers who saw or heard of his dreams and visions were in the midst of the awful atrocities done to those who followed the way of Christ. The writings were a message that those killed and maimed by the cruel tortures would come out of it on the other side as victorious, robed in white just as victorious Roman generals would be dressed for their victory parades after a battle.

Being victorious doesn't mean they will escape the pain but that they will have God with them.

We know that winning a war doesn't mean there will not be wounds and scars and pain. If we have met those who have been through wars and conflicts it doesn't end when a treaty is signed.

We still live in troubled times. Since the dawn of time there have always been conflicts and wars, they just seem to get bigger as we learn more devastating ways of inflicting pain and death.

The message of this section of the book of Revelations is to tell us that this world's pain and suffering inflicted by greed and lust for power is not all there is.

Living a Christian life is **not** a life saved from troubles and distress it **is** that living as a child of God helps us to endure them.

John the divine as he wrote believed they were living through the end times and that there would be something more wonderful to follow.

The people in John's imagery of heavenly worship and celebration, in the direct presence of the God who created all there is, is at its core, an acknowledgement and a thanksgiving for our very being.

Not done in the hope of gaining something, but a celebration of what is.

In the few verses we heard from John's first letter he describes us as being children of God and at the last, when we have a clear image of Jesus the Christ we will become like him. As I guess we must be if we are to be children of God.

It is interesting to consider the Gospel passage alongside the Revelation reading. The Gospel reading gives us the beatitudes, the blessings from the sermon on mount.

In it Jesus speaks of a series of people who may not be considered blessed by those around them.

Theologian Tom Wright is of the opinion that in these teachings Jesus is not saying "try to change to be like this" but is saying "if you're like this it is fine, you will be blessed". Actually Tom Wright in his translation replaces the word **Blessed** with the phrase **Wonderful News**.

The types of people in this list may have been thought of as being the opposite of Blessed - cursed or having bad luck. Yet again Jesus turns what might be expected upside down.

We will most likely be able to relate to one or more of the categories of people.

Most of us have probably experienced bereavement,

Also poor in spirit that is - low, depressed, useless

Meek – recognizing that we are not in control. Something seen as weak by society.

As with the other people Jesus speaks of, what society considers the norm is not what is right for the kingdom of God.

Just as the Romans would have considered the executed Christians to be losers, in god's view they are the winners, the victorious.

As saints in God's church we are often called to stand against the norms of society, which feels like a battle and can be uncomfortable and painful at times.

May we stand firm in our faith with all those who have gone before, are now and will be in the future.
Amen