

# All Saint's Day observed, November 5, 2017

21st Sunday after Trinity, Proper 26(31)

**LUTHERAN**

## **LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY**

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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November 2, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa.*



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For\\_All\\_the\\_Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_All_the_Saints)

### **Hymn of the Day**

**Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 677 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 463**

**"For all the saints who from their labors rest"**

"For All the Saints" is considered to be William W. How's ([PHH 279](#)) finest hymn text. Originally in eleven stanzas, it was published in Earl Nelson's *Hymns for Saints' Days* (1864) with the heading, "Saints' Day Hymn. A Cloud of Witnesses. Heb. 12:1." The *Psalter Hymnal* includes the original stanzas 1-2, 6-8, and 10-11, with modernized pronouns. (Among the stanzas omitted in most hymnals are those that begin "for all the apostles," "for all the evangelists," and "for all the martyrs.")

The text begins with a proclamation of thanksgiving for the saints ("the cloud of witnesses") who confessed Christ and found in him protection and inspiration (st. 1-2). That proclamation is followed by a prayer for Christ's soldiers on earth to be "faithful, true, and bold" (st. 3). At the crux of the text is the confession of a "blest communion" of saints in heaven and on earth (st. 4). Though the holy warfare may be "fierce and long" (st. 5), "all the saints" may take courage from the vision of a victorious church that worships the triune God on that "more glorious day" (st. 6-7).

Scripture References:

st. 1 = Rev. 14:13, Heb. 12:1-2

st. 3 = Rev. 2:10

st. 4 = John 17:22

st. 6 = Prov. 4:18

st. 7 = Rev. 7:9-17

[https://hymnary.org/text/for\\_all\\_the\\_saints\\_who\\_from\\_their\\_labors](https://hymnary.org/text/for_all_the_saints_who_from_their_labors)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvFr8hwFdNM> Gerald Ford funeral service at National Cathedral.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwE6HGKxzg> Higher Things youth conference, Te Deum 2015, recorded in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5\\_JipOkEnc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5_JipOkEnc) A Symphonic Band Arrangement of Sine Nomine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlFAu9LLgsE> Mark Dwyer plays the hymn For All the Saints of Sine Nomine on the pipe organ

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**All Saints Day observed, Revelation 7:(2-8) 9-17; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Revelation 7:9-17 (Next Week :Amos 5:18-24; RCL, Joshua 24:1-3s, 14-25 or Amos 5:18-24 or Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-16 or 6:17-20)**

*"When Revelation 7:9-17 is read as an isolated unit, much of its meaning is lost.*

*To grasp the passage's fuller meaning we need to go to chapter 6, where the first six seals on the scroll are opened. After the sixth seal is opened (verse 12), the physical foundations of creation are rattled. Destruction reaches such a pitch that all people hide. Key is their question in 6:17. Now that the day of wrath has come, "Who is able to stand?"*

*When John the Seer reaches that point in his visions, he stops. The suffering and destruction of the first six seals are overwhelming, and so he introduces a break, a timeout that he uses to lift the vision of God's people from the difficulties of the present to the glories of the future. In 7:1-8, the angels of God seal the 144,000. The sealing, with a likely reference to baptism, sustains the church on earth. The designation of twelve tribes times twelve thousand people per tribe envisions the church in this world as part of God's army in battle with the powers of evil. The opening vision of chapter 7, then, is of the church militant..." (continued after the reading)*

### **The 144,000 of Israel Sealed**

*7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. <sup>2</sup> Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, <sup>3</sup> saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." <sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:*

<sup>5</sup> 12,000 from the tribe of Judah were sealed,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Reuben,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Gad,  
<sup>6</sup> 12,000 from the tribe of Asher,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh,  
<sup>7</sup> 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Levi,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar,  
<sup>8</sup> 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph,  
 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin were sealed.

### **A Great Multitude from Every Nation**

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" <sup>11</sup> And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying,

“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”\*

<sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” <sup>14</sup> I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> “Therefore they are before the throne of God,  
and serve him day and night in his temple;  
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

<sup>16</sup> They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them,  
nor any scorching heat.

<sup>17</sup> For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

“The fulcrum on which the passage balances is the difference between verse 4 and verse 9. In verse 4 John “heard the number.” In verse 9 he “looked.” What he sees is a vast international, multi-racial, multi-lingual throng of people so great that no one could count it. Although scholars differ in their understanding of how the people in 7:1-8 relate to the people in 7:9-17, I think that in the latter verses we have the church in heaven, or what we sometimes call the church triumphant...

The “crying out” of the multitude in 7:10 connects us with 6:10, where impatient martyrs resting under the throne of God also cry out—in that case for justice. 7:10 gives an answer, as the unnumbered throng praises God. The word *salvation*, for which they praise God and the Lamb, is indeed in Greek the word *salvation*, but that term can also be used for *victory*, which would be appropriate in this view of the final future.

In verses 11-12 heavenly beings join in the singing. As we might expect in Revelation, they use seven terms to praise God. The center one is often the most significant, and it is the word *thanksgiving*. We will see why.

In verses 13-14 we have a temporary reversal of the way apocalyptic literature usually functions. One of the heavenly beings asks John the meaning of the vision. John appropriately turns the question back to the elder, who as the heavenly being is the one to interpret. The NRSV, unfortunately, mistranslates his response. “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal,” should be translated as “these are they who are coming ....” The participle that means *coming* is present tense and refers to an ongoing action: those who are killed are still coming. Note that the church has not been “raptured” out (a non-biblical doctrine often foisted onto Revelation); the church suffers...

The preacher can easily skip over verses 15-17, but they contain great words of comfort. Believers stand before God's throne and worship God. God, in turn, will shelter them...

In the final verse, John once more plays with language and images. It is the Lamb who will be the shepherd (also in 12:5, 19:15) who leads God's people to the “springs of the water of life.” “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (see also 21:1-4).

With that vision in their minds and hearts, those who listen to the reading of Revelation are ready to experience the breaking of the seventh and final seal--which is followed immediately by the next cycle of seven end-time woes, that of the trumpets (8:1-2). They continue their journey through John's visions by having given thanks to the one who has saved them and who provides everything needed for life.

So who is able to stand? Those whom the Lamb has washed. With that word of encouragement, this persecuted minority--the first-century church--is able to move ahead, because they know where God is taking them. And today's believers know the same."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=568](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=568) **Walter F. Taylor, Jr.**  
Ernest W. and Edith S. Ogram Professor of New Testament Studies, Trinity Lutheran Seminary,  
Columbus, OH

**\*Required Listening/Singing!**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x2fSxOeij4> if you would like to sing along. "Despite its length the entire Messiah was written by Handel in just 24 days straight! Score from cpdl.org" [morphthing1](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUHpXP-w2DU> if you would like to sing along and/or follow the orchestra [PrincepsMusicae](#)

<https://vimeo.com/127451415> "Sanctuary Chorus; Wayne Slater, organist; Scott Dean, director."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ngSsaSimi8A> "The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square"

**Psalm 149; RCL, Psalm 34:1-10, 22 (Psalm 70; RCL, Psalm 78:1-7 or Psalm 70)**

***"Sing to the LORD a New Song***

*Presumably, Psalm 149 was chosen as the lectionary psalm for All Saints Day because the "saints" show up three times in this psalm (verses 1, 5, 9 NIV).*

*Indeed, no other psalm has such a "triple play" of saintliness. In NRSV, these are the "faithful"; more significantly, in Hebrew, they are the hasidim (though this is not yet the eighteenth-century movement of mystical Judaism that now shares that name)." (continued after the reading)*

**149 Praise the LORD!**

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

<sup>2</sup> **Let** Israel be glad in his Maker;

**let** the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

<sup>3</sup> **Let** them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

<sup>4</sup> For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;  
 he adorns the humble with salvation.

<sup>5</sup> **Let** the godly exult in glory;  
**let** them sing for joy on their beds.

<sup>6</sup> **Let** the high praises of God be in their throats  
 and two-edged swords in their hands,

<sup>7</sup> to execute vengeance on the nations  
 and punishments on the peoples,

<sup>8</sup> to bind their kings with chains  
 and their nobles with fetters of iron,

<sup>9</sup> to execute on them the judgment written!

This is honor for all his godly ones.

**Praise the LORD!**

“...What did it mean in biblical times to be *hasid*, a faithful one, a saint? The key has to be the adjective’s relation to the noun: *hesed*, God’s own “steadfast love.” Thus, the “saints” in the Old Testament were those who lived in a mutual relationship of *hesed* with God. The relationship worked both ways. Primary, obviously, was God’s own steadfast love -- pure undeserved gift and the basis of any possible human response or “saintliness”: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7). In the Bible, sainthood is God’s work, first, last, and always...

Psalm 149 would not yet have been able to sing of eternal bliss, but it was quite able to revel in the bliss of present worship. Israel’s praise, too, had what we might anachronistically call an eschatological dimension -- entering already, through ritual, song, and story, into the fullness of life that God has always meant for God’s people, but that is now frequently hidden by personal trials and communal distress.

Psalm 149 is one of the “final Hallel,” those five songs of praise that conclude the Psalter -- five, perhaps, to match the five “books” of the Psalter, those in turn matching the five books of Moses. All things hang together in those “fives,” and the five final psalms sing of God’s works in creation and history, in our personal and communal lives, that eventually leave us to do nothing else but praise, along with “everything that breathes” (Psalm 150:12), the Psalter’s closing invitation...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1825](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1825)

[Fred Gaiser](#), Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

“Ah, the Psalms. We love them, and then duck for cover  
 as they swing around and whack us on the back of the head!

Psalm 149 is mostly all sweetness and soaring music ...

So far so good.

But suddenly a double-edged sword is placed in your hands  
and around you the crowd yells for victory  
crying for the head of the President  
waving bayonets in the air  
roaring for revenge  
roaring for blood!

Feel free to stop reading at verse 5.

Or can we absorb the violence  
transform the hunger to punish and control?  
Can we confront our own hidden fantasies  
of retribution for those who have hurt us?  
What are the victories we celebrate  
the victories over darkness that give substance to our joy?  
so that praise is hard-won and worship is bone-deep”

<http://www.conversations.net.nz/psalm-149-the-double-edged-sword.html> “reflection by  
Silvia Purdie”

**1 John 3:1-3; RCL, the same reading (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; RCL, the same reading)**

*“The closing lines of chapter 2 reminded the readers of Jesus' expected return, and called for a life of righteousness that will allow "boldness" when he comes.*

*The first two verses of chapter 3 root this confident hope in what God has already done. The text begins where we must always begin, with the love of God given to us.*

*The content of that love (or perhaps its result) is that we are called "God's children". This is not just wishing or pretending; we are what God declares us to be. The implicit imagery here is one of adoption. God lovingly calls us God's children, and that declaration makes it so. We are God's children not by our choice or by our accomplishment, but by the Father's love...”*

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1286](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1286) **Brian Peterson**  
Professor of New Testament, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC

3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears<sup>[a]</sup> we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

a. [1 John 3:2](#) Or when it appears

“If 1 John had a social media footprint, this week’s status update would read, “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).



These are words of encouragement written to a community that is troubled by schism. Whatever were the details of the split -- and since we have a response by only one side we have to read between the lines and in mirror-image to figure it out -- the disagreement has been serious enough that some folks have packed up and left the church. Anyone who has experienced the trauma of a congregational (or denominational) split can imagine how devastating this development would have been for parties on both sides of the divide.

This community was unable to remain in fellowship due to significant differences in their beliefs about Jesus. At the heart of the matter, according to the author, is that the people who have left are denying that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22) and that he is the incarnate Son of God (1 John 4:2-3). They still understand themselves to be followers of Jesus, but what they believe and confess about him differs from those who remain...

"See!" Perhaps better translated *Look at!*, the first word of the passage suggests that the love given by God is something that people can actually see. It is not a fuzzy, feel-good sensation, but a concrete and visible reality that has already been bestowed on the community that follows Christ...

Like the readers of 1 John, perhaps the people gathered for worship in today's churches could benefit from an occasional reminder that God has already bestowed upon them the thing that is most important for being the people they are called to be.

**They are children of God. Already. Today. Now."**

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2243](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2243) [Audrey West](#)  
Adjunct Professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL

## "The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th Chapter"

**Matthew 5:1-12; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 25:1-13; RCL, the same reading)**

"HERE the [evangelist](#) with a formal stately preface declares how [Christ](#) disposed himself for the sermon he was about to [deliver](#); that he went upon a [mountain](#), and sat down, and opened his mouth; so that we see he was in earnest. These are the three things, it is commonly said, that mark a good [preacher](#); first, that he take his place; secondly, that he open his mouth and say something; thirdly, that he know when to stop."

<http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/37luther1.htm> Martin Luther

### **The Sermon on the Mount**

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

### **The Beatitudes**

<sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons<sup>[a]</sup> of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

a. [Matthew 5:9](#) Greek *huiioi*; see Preface

“This is the Gospel of the Lord”      “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...Theologians have struggled with the Sermon on the Mount for ages. During the Reformation, Martin Luther thought these teachings were impossible ideals that God wanted us to strive for even though we could never reach them. The Mennonites, on the other hand, saw these teachings as the core of Christianity and based their philosophy of nonviolence on the Sermon on the Mount.

Here is a case where I think it is more important to look at the style of Jesus rather than a solely philosophical look. Jesus is a master at delivering unconventional wisdom. Conventional wisdom wants to uphold the status quo and keep order. That is what makes it conventional, right? Jesus delivers unconventional wisdom, because he aims to challenge the status quo of all types. So he says things that at first seem to be impossible, shocking, upside down or crazy – until you really think about and realize he might just be on to something.

Think for a minute about the conventional wisdom in our society and you will notice that it is completely opposite from what Jesus has to say in the Beatitudes. Instead of blessed are the poor in spirit, conventional wisdom says, “Put on a happy face.” ...

Conventional wisdom does not tell us to take time to mourn our losses. Move on get over it! ...

The meek and merciful are not lifted up as the ideals of society. Instead we are told things like, “Nice guys finish last.” ...

Peacemakers may get holidays named after them...after they are shot down...

So what is so blessed about the Beatitudes? Blessings come when we are close to God. We think we are closest to God when everything is going well, when we are happy, successful and in charge of life. But Jesus says that we are more likely to be closer to God when we experience human vulnerability – when our spirits are poor, when we mourn, feel powerless, when we really hunger and thirst for meaning, when we try to be pure in heart, but find out how impure we really can be, when we take on the difficult work of peacemaking, or get persecuted. Truly in these difficult moments we come closer to knowing the real presence of God...

God became more real to me as I learned that I cannot control things and I have to let go. Working with people who are homeless and trying to help people struggling with addiction teach me patience, mercy and compassion. I have come to know God in my trials, failures, tragedies and hubris.

So when is it that I am truly blessed? Paul is right again (darn him) that it is good to give thanks in all things, because we never know which moments will truly bring us closer to God. Through the Beatitudes Jesus reminds us to keep our eyes open at the most unlikely times, because that is when we might find the true reality of God's love.

<http://bloomingcactus.typepad.com/bloomingcactus/2014/01/what-is-so-blessed-about-the-beatitudes-matthew-51-12.html> **The Reverend Todd Weir**, “pastor at First Churches, Northampton writing about all things spiritual, looking for hope in tough times. Poughkeepsie, New York”



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“Agnus Day is the creation of Pastor James Wetzstein, a Lutheran pastor.” He really enjoyed this reading, enjoy them all.

[Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2015, Oct 28, [Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 1997, Nov 1, [Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2000, Nov 1  
[Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2001, Oct 31, [Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2002, Oct 31, [Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2008, Oct 29  
[Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2011, Jan 24, [Matthew 5:1-12](#) — 2014, Oct 28