
All the Saints

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 2 November 2025

Ephesians 1:15-23 • Luke 6:20-31



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

Some people think they have everything they need, and have no need of God.

It's easy to understand. God is invisible to the eye, and usually makes his presence felt indirectly. As the 19th Psalm says:

- ¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
- ² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
- ³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
- ⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

(Psalm 19:1-4)

We can observe the wonders of God, the brilliance and perfection of his creation, when we look at the world around us. This Psalm specifically says that such

knowledge comes without speech — nothing which appeals to our rational mind, or at least to the portion that processes words. But the Creator is evident in everything we see — the sky and the stars and the world around us.

But it is easy to say, effectively, “I don’t know where all this came from, but I don’t believe there was any supernatural cause. It’s all just nature,” and nature is considered to be apart from God. It just — happens.

Similarly, when we come to think of our own lives, it is easy to live from day to day, going about our business and not thinking about where it all comes from, or who is in ultimate control. Do I think about God when I pay for my groceries? Do I think about God when I drive down the highway? Everything I see, everything I touch, everyone I meet, is just — there. No reason to bring God into it!

Well, you’ve heard me preach often enough to know that one of my favourite Bible passages is from Paul: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:16-18). Paul is telling us to remember that all things — blessings and woes — come from God, and we are to give God thanks — always. The blessings and woes are what Jesus speaks about in today’s passage from Luke. In a nutshell, those who have faith in Jesus will receive the eternal reward in heaven, although they may now suffer various trials and difficulties. But those who look to have their rewards in this life? That’s all they will get. Without faith in Jesus Christ, the world is all you get, and after that, after this life, you will have your trials. Beautiful as it is, the world is not enough — there is so much more beauty to be found in our ongoing life with God in heaven. Don’t be short-sighted, Jesus is saying. Consider the promise that God gives you. Don’t throw it away by searching only for earthly rewards.

In our Ephesians reading, Paul speaks about the future we, as people of faith, may look forward to:

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

(Eph 1:17-19)

This is one of those great, long Bible sentences — it covers three verses by itself. It could do with some unpacking. To begin with, Paul is praying for the Ephesians. Paul is constant in prayer, and all of his letters speak of how he longs for his people, those who are part of the various churches he writes to, to truly

know the Lord Jesus Christ. Our ability to know Christ comes from Christ himself. When we pray to God for understanding, God will answer that prayer. Here, Paul prays that God will give the Ephesians “a spirit of wisdom and revelation.” Our faith is not based on obtaining any special knowledge, as the cult of the Gnostics believed. All the understanding we need to follow Jesus is ours for the asking, and all people may have it.

Next, Paul asks particularly that the Ephesians may receive the wisdom to understand the hope which God gives us, the hope of eternal life. Wisdom of any kind is always good, but true wisdom seeks to know the most important things about our relationship to God and the meaning of God’s promise to us. God wants to bring us to himself and experience the full reward of heaven — “the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints.” Paul prays that God will reveal all this to the Ephesians, as well as to give them an understanding of God’s own power and greatness, a power which is used for our benefit, “for us who believe.”

Paul goes on to say that God gave this power to Jesus Christ. The church is the body of Christ, and so by belonging to the church, we too share in this knowledge and power, through Communion. It is God’s great gift to us, whom Paul calls saints. Who are the saints? St John, St Luke, St Michael? Yes, those are certainly saints. But in a greater sense, all who call on the name of Christ and dedicate their lives to him, and receive their reward in heaven, are saints. Paul often speaks in his letters to the churches about the saints. In Romans, he writes:

Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. (Romans 16:15)

In Corinthians, he writes:

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. (2 Cor 13:12)

In Hebrews, he writes:

Greet all your leaders and all the saints. (Hebrews 13:24)

Whom is he talking about? Not about St John, St Mark, St Thomas, and all those we know today. He’s talking about those in the church, who call upon Jesus’ name, and give their lives to him. And that’s all of us, isn’t it? We are all saints. The church is made up of saints.

In talking of the blessings and woes, Jesus is pushing us to accept this inheritance, from God, through Jesus himself. Those who are blessed are the saints, who will know God’s love and eternal promise. All the other things will fall away — the poverty, the weeping, the hunger, the persecution — to reveal the fulfilment of the promise which we will see in time. Amen.