

November 1
All Saints' Day

Let us pray: Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

The Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9

The wisdom books of the Hebrew people developed as a resource for their own people and were also seen as a source of inspiration for people of all nations. This particular reading has encouraged and comforted Jewish and Christian people for many generations. A reading from the Book of Wisdom:

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace.
For though in the sight of others they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.
Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.
In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.
They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them forever.
Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones,
and he watches over his elect.

-- Here ends the reading

Psalm 24 (responsively by whole verse)

[613]

- 1 The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it, *
the world and all who dwell therein.
- 2 For it is he who founded it upon the seas *
and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.**
- 3 "Who can ascend the hill of the LORD? *
and who can stand in his holy place?"

- 4 "Those who have clean hands and a pure heart, *
who have not pledged themselves to falsehood,
nor sworn by what is a fraud.**
- 5 They shall receive a blessing from the LORD *
and a just reward from the God of their salvation."
- 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him, *
of those who seek your face, O God of Jacob.**
- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; *
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 8 "Who is this King of glory?" *
"The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle."**
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates;
lift them high, O everlasting doors; *
and the King of glory shall come in.
- 10 "Who is he, this King of glory?" *
"The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory."**

The Epistle

Revelation 21:1-6a

The book of Revelation was written in the mid 90's in response to persecution or the immediate threat of persecution. Readers were encouraged to see the decline of Rome as a sign that chaos and pathos would soon be replaced by the peaceful reign of God. In this new day the evil forces of the world would be eliminated and the existing world would be reconstituted as a place of justice and peace. A reading from Revelation:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end."

This story about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead serves several purposes in the 4th Gospel. It foreshadows Jesus' own resurrection. It is the last healing story prior to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. It is a reminder to 1st century believers that eternal life is not just about life after death; eternal life begins when a person places his or her faith in Christ.

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

November 8**Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost**

Let us pray: O God, whose blessed Son came into the world that he might destroy the works of the devil and make us children of God and heirs of eternal life: Grant that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture*1 Kings 17:8-16*

The audience for this ancient story was divided: some readers worshiped Baal, and others worshiped Yahweh. The story is set in Sidon, a stronghold of Baal worship, where God sends the prophet to help an impoverished Gentile widow. The story is not entirely about charity: it is also designed to demonstrate that Yahweh is mightier than Baal, that Yahweh can accomplish miracles, and that Yahweh – not Baal – is in charge of nature, life, and death. A reading from 1st Kings:

The word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, "Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you." So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink." As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a

couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth." She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Psalm 146 (responsively by whole verse)

[803]

- 1 Hallelujah!
Praise the LORD, O my soul! *
I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
- 2 Put not your trust in rulers, nor in any child of earth, *
for there is no help in them.**
- 3 When they breathe their last, they return to earth, *
and in that day their thoughts perish.
- 4 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help! *
whose hope is in the LORD their God;**
- 5 Who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them; *
who keeps his promise for ever;
- 6 Who gives justice to those who are oppressed, *
and food to those who hunger.**
- 7 The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind; *
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
- 8 The LORD loves the righteous;
the LORD cares for the stranger; *
he sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.**
- 9 The LORD shall reign for ever, *
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.
Hallelujah!

The Epistle

Hebrews 9:24-28

In this reading the author continues his or her lengthy comparison of Jesus as the Great High Priest to the high priests of Israel. These mortal priests die and have to be replaced, and their sacrifices have to be repeated again and again. According to the author of this epistle, Jesus made one sacrifice for all humankind: his once-for-all sacrifice will never be repeated. A reading from Hebrews:

Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him

The Gospel

Mark 12:38-44

In this familiar reading Jesus challenges leaders of the religious establishment and his disciples to follow the example of a poor widow. She quietly made a sacrificial gift to the temple offering, in great contrast to the affluent people whose highly visible contributions were made with ease -- and with little impact on their personal budgets.

Teaching in the temple, Jesus said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

November 15

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Let us pray: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

A reading from Hebrew scripture

Daniel 12:1-3

Although the original context of this reading has been lost, this ancient document provides clues to early Jewish ideas about the end of time and God's eventual judgment. Because many early followers of Jesus were Jewish, these ideas carried over into the Christian movement and have shaped popular theology about God's judgment and the end of history. A reading from the book of Daniel:

The Lord spoke to Daniel in a vision and said, "At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep

in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Psalm 16 (responsively by whole verse)

[599]

- 1 Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you; *
I have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord,
my good above all other."
- 2 All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land, *
upon those who are noble among the people.**
- 3 But those who run after other gods *
shall have their troubles multiplied.
- 4 Their libations of blood I will not offer, *
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.**
- 5 O LORD, YOU are my portion and my cup; *
it is you who uphold my lot.
- 6 My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; *
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.**
- 7 I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel; *
my heart teaches me, night after night.
- 8 I have set the LORD always before me; *
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.**
- 9 My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; *
my body also shall rest in hope.
- 10 For you will not abandon me to the grave, *
nor let your holy one see the Pit.**
- 11 You will show me the path of life; *
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

The Epistle

Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25

The epistle to the Hebrews was written to new Jewish Christians who were tempted to abandon their new faith in the face of intense pressure and hardship. Using imagery from their Jewish heritage, the author encourages them to be faithful to their new commitment which he or she considers superior to their previous beliefs. Although this language about priestly sacrifice is foreign to modern readers, the audience would have clearly understood the author's claims about Jesus. A reading from the book of Hebrews:

Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The Gospel

Mark 13:1-8

By the time this gospel was written, the great Jerusalem temple built by Herod the Great had been destroyed. Some readers hear these words of Jesus as a precise prediction of things to come, while others hear these remarks as assurance to first-century believers that God's faithful presence was not tied to the temple itself.

As Jesus came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs."

November 22

Christ the King Sunday: the Last Sunday after Pentecost

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

Throughout history turbulent eras have been seen by some religious folks as the imminent end of history. The book of Daniel is one of the apocalyptic or "end of time" documents of the Hebrew people. Such writings are filled with images and dreams about characters on the current political and religious scene who will soon participate in the battle between good and evil. A reading from Daniel:

As I watched,
thrones were set in place,

and an Ancient One took his throne,
his clothing was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
and its wheels were burning fire.
A stream of fire issued
and flowed out from his presence.
A thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.
The court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.
As I watched in the night visions,
I saw one like a human being
coming with the clouds of heaven.
And he came to the Ancient One
and was presented before him.
To him was given dominion
and glory and kingship,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
that shall not pass away,
and his kingship is one
that shall never be destroyed.

Psalm 93 (responsively by whole verse)

[722]

- 1 The LORD is King;
he has put on splendid apparel; *
the LORD has put on his apparel
and girded himself with strength.
- 2 He has made the whole world so sure *
that it cannot be moved;**
- 3 Ever since the world began, your throne has been established; *
you are from everlasting.
- 4 The waters have lifted up, O LORD,
the waters have lifted up their voice; *
the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.**
- 5 Mightier than the sound of many waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea, *
mightier is the LORD who dwells on high.
- 6 Your testimonies are very sure, *
and holiness adorns your house, O LORD,
for ever and for evermore.**

The Book of Revelation is the most famous Christian apocalyptic material. Like Daniel and apocalyptic materials from a variety of religious traditions, Revelation is filled with symbolic imagery referring to the spiritual warfare perceived to be imminent among forces on the author's current scene. A reading from Revelation:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;
 every eye will see him,
 even those who pierced him;
 and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.
 So it is to be. Amen.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

This familiar conversation between Pilate and Jesus following Jesus' arrest contrasts political kingship of this world with kingship that is spiritual and eternal.

Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

November 29

The First Sunday of Advent

Let us pray: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from Hebrew Scripture

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Despite widespread devastation and a feeble nation in ruins, the prophet Jeremiah remained optimistic that God would restore the Hebrew people if they remained

faithful. Many who heard Jeremiah's preaching considered him incredibly naïve, some thought he had lost his mind, and some wondered if he could somehow be right. A reading from the prophet Jeremiah:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

Psalm 25:1-9 (responsively by whole verse)

[614]

- 1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
my God, I put my trust in you; *
let me not be humiliated,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
- 2 Let none who look to you be put to shame; *
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.**
- 3 Show me your ways, O LORD, *
and teach me your paths.
- 4 Lead me in your truth and teach me, *
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all the day long.**
- 5 Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love, *
for they are from everlasting.
- 6 Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions; *
remember me according to your love
and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.**
- 7 Gracious and upright is the LORD; *
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.
- 8 He guides the humble in doing right *
and teaches his way to the lowly.**
- 9 All the paths of the LORD are love and faithfulness *
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The Epistle

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Paul had heard from Timothy about the loving, faithful, and generous congregation in Thessalonica. In this reading Paul gives thanks for the congregation's faithfulness and looks forward to the opportunity to be with them soon – to teach them even more about the new spiritual life they have begun through faith in Christ. A reading from 1st Thessalonians:

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

The Gospel

Luke 21:25-36

Even in the ancient world of Jesus' day people were tempted to pursue unimportant things and to ignore the spiritual dimension of life. In this unusual reading, listeners are encouraged to focus on the inner life, to understand that the second coming of Christ is not just a future event in the clouds, but also a current event in the hearts of those who are receptive.

Jesus said, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."