

# All Saints Day



## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, whose people are knit together in one holy Church, the body of Christ our Lord; Grant us grace to follow your blessed saints in lives of faith and commitment, and to know the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

## Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18

{1} In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: {2} I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, {3} and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.... {15} As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me. {16} I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: {17} "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. {18} But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever--forever and ever."

*1. the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon: 556 b.c.*

*3. four great beasts:* The four great beasts are identified in verse 17 as four kings. The fourth kingdom is further identified in verses 23 ff. "...it is undoubtedly the Macedonian-Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and his successors that is thus characterized, and it a sobering reflection that it was this empire, for all that it mediated to the ancient peoples of the East the achievements of Greek culture, that could appear, in the eyes of a member of a subject people, to be the worst of all tyrannies." [1]

*16. one of the attendants:* An angelic interpreter

*18. the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever:* Earthly kingdoms with all their earthly power cannot finally dispossess the Most High of sovereignty over the earth and its people, or the holy ones of their authority under God to exercise dominion.

## Psalms 149

{1} Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. {2} Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. {3} Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre. {4} For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. {5} Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. {6} Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, {7} to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, {8} to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, {9} to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!

*6-7. Let...two-edged swords [be] in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples:* Israel is encouraged to engage in activity contrary to that encouraged by Jesus in the Gospel: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the

cheek, offer the other also.... Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:27-31).

## Ephesians 1:11-23

{11} In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, {12} so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. {13} In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; {14} this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory. {15} I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason {16} I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. {17} 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. {20} God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, {21} far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. {22} And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, {23} which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Verses 11-14 are part of a long sentence in Greek which begins in verse 3. "It is an exclamation of praise and prayer, resembling those pronounced in Jewish synagogues and homes." It probably reflects Christian oral, liturgical tradition. [2] Verses 15-23 also has the form of a single sentence in Greek.

*11-13:* "Verses 11-13 appear to explain in terms of subjective experience why the bold statement on possession ["...we have redemption, freedom of our trespasses"] was made in vs. 7.... this experience is completely dependent upon God's decision and action.... And yet the overwhelming grace does not condemn man to simple passivity.... it makes and shapes *our* and *your* history." [3]

*we...you:* "We", including Paul, are Christian Jews, while "you" are Christian non-Jews. In verse 12 "we" is further clarified as "the first to set our hope on Christ."

*14. this:* Literally, "he." The pronoun is masculine which would point to Jesus Christ as the antecedent. However, context would suggest that the Holy Spirit is meant to be the "pledge of our inheritance." [4]

*15. I have heard of your faith:* See Colossians 1:4; Romans 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

*16. I do not cease to give thanks for you:* See Romans 1:9; For positive formulations of the same thought see Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 1:4.

*17. a spirit of wisdom and revelation:* "Paul intends to affirm that God's Spirit creates in man a new (human) spirit (cf. 4:23), for the noun "Spirit" is used by Paul with and without an article to denote the Holy Spirit of God." [5]

*18. the hope to which he has called you:* Our hope "lies not so much on the mood of the person hoping as on the substance or subject matter of the expectation. Hope is for all practical purposes equated with the thing hoped for." [6] Christ is the hope to which we have been called (Colossians 1:27).

*21. far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named:* "With all these terms Paul denotes the angelic or demonic powers that reside in the heavens." [7] There are other lists of heavenly powers in Colossians 1:15;

20b; Philippians 2:10. See also Psalm 103:19-22.

22-23. *he has put all things under his feet*: A close paraphrase of Psalm 8:6b.

*made him the head over all things for the church...who fills all in all*: Christ is both head of the church and head of the cosmos.

### Luke 6:20-31

{20} Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. {21} "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. {22} "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. {23} Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. {24} "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. {25} "Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. "Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. {26} "Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. {27} "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, {28} bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. {29} If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. {30} Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. {31} Do to others as you would have them do to you.

"One of the main differences between the S[ermon on the]M[ount] and the S[ermon on the]P[lain] lies in the view of human society each presents.... The SM sees the surrounding world in terms of Jewish thought, separating people into groups of the righteous and the unrighteous and defining the righteous as the 'poor in spirit.'

"In contrast, the SP divides human society into the poor and the rich. This division reflects the conceptual world of the Hellenistic moralists, who tend to view the poor positively while castigating the rich." [8]

20b-23: Four blessings for the poor, the hungry, those who weep, and those who are hated and excluded.

24-26: Four corresponding threats or woes to the rich, those who are full, those who laugh, and those who are spoken well of.

27-28: Four maxims dealing with appropriate responses to enemies, those who hate you, those who curse you, and those who abuse you.

27. *Love your enemies*: "The commandment to love the enemy is cited, as elsewhere in the New Testament, as Jesus' fundamental ethical doctrine. The SP regards this doctrine as authoritative tradition, and thus as well known to the Christian community. Hence the reason for citing it here is not to introduce it for the first time but to interpret it appropriately. The second line provides a parallel variation: 'Do good to those who hate you' ([*kalos poieite tous misousin hymas*]). The word 'love' ([*agapan*]) is now identified with 'doing good' ([*kalos poiein*]), a general Greek moral term, while the 'enemies' ([*echthroi*]) are concretely explained as 'those who hate you.' Thus loving and hating, doing good and being inimical, interpret each other.

"For the Greeks, the enemy is the opposite of a friend. With the friend one is united in a bond of love ([*phylia*]) that consists of mutual acts of doing good. Therefore, the variation on vs 27c ["do good to those who hate you"] means in effect that the term 'love' is interpreted here in the context of friendship, an interpretation that makes good sense to a student of Greek origin." [9]

28. *bless those who curse you*: "The variation in vs 28a identifies a form of hostility common in antiquity: cursing, a magical application of enmity. The ordinary reaction would be to respond in kind and to answer curse with curse. The SP, however,

recommends the opposite of the curse, namely, the blessing.

"This command, which has no parallel in the SM, is known, however from other early Christians sources in similar contexts. The earliest parallel to it comes from Paul, who refers to it in Rom 12:14: 'Bless those who persecute (you), bless and do not curse (them).' Shorter is the form in 1 Cor 4:12: 'as those who are maligned we bless.' Even the passage on the tongue in James 3 appears to be aware of it (3:9-10)." [10]

29-30: Four examples of abuse: striking, taking away a coat, begging, taking away goods. "...vss 29-30 seem to serve primarily a pedagogical function by admitting what would easily be the students' objections to the maxims. The four imaginary cases demonstrate the absurd consequences of Jesus' maxims when put into practice. They leave one with the question: Is this sort of thing really what Jesus demands and what Christian ethics consists of? Indeed it is. Yet the following section (vss 31-35) will point out that it is not as unreasonable a position as it would appear initially. Thus one must not mistakenly understand these four examples as commands in themselves, although they are in fact commands grammatically; they are in reality merely illustrations in an ongoing argument exaggerated by design." [11]

29: *If anyone strikes you on the cheek*: This is an act of humiliation even today. The action Jesus advocates is to offer the other cheek and to invite a second humiliating blow. "Even though the act appears contemptible, it is not. To see this recommendation as proposing total inaction or humble submission is a misreading. Rather, the recommendation proposes taking the initiative, by which stance the conventional act of humiliation becomes an act of provocation that calls into question the entire posture of the assailant." [12] I would suggest that our motivation should not be calling our assailant's posture into question, but instead it should be to obey our Lord's command to love our assailant.

31: The Golden Rule. At this point the underlying rationale for the Christian response to oppression is stated: do what you would have done to you. If you respond in the normal way, you are not better than those who mistreat you. But you *are* better! You are blessed! You do not love in the expectation that your oppressors will change how they act, but only because you are "children of the Most High" (6:35b). The Christian saints' moral imperative is "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (6:36)

## Reflection

As early as the third century the martyrs of the church were commemorated on a single day. "When the festival was introduced in the West it was kept first on May 13, the date of the dedication of the rebuilt Roman Pantheon to St. Mary and All Martyrs. In modern practice, All Saint's Days commemorates not only all the martyrs but all the people of God, living and dead, who form the mystical body of Christ, as the Prayer of the Day makes clear." [13]

The first lesson is so mutilated and truncated that its proper message is completely concealed. All that is left is the notion that the events of human history, no matter how disturbing, are irrelevant to God, and to God's holy ones, who will prevail in the end.

The saints have come to know God, not by their own efforts, but by the power of God in Christ. Those who have put their lives in Christ's hands should trust the one whom God has made the head of all things for the church which is his body.

The Gospel reminds us that the Christian hope is not in this world or in the things of this world. In fact, it is not even in the apocalyptic reversal of fortunes, as much as that

is a part of the Gospel of Luke, and may be a part of the hope of believers. Rather it is in the Father's mercy toward us, in the Son's surrender to death, in the power of the Spirit in our lives leading us to act as God's children that our hope lies. It may not be a very inviting hope for those of the world, but we should not soft pedal it on that account.

### Hymns [14]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

265 --E--Christ, Whose Glory

174 --D--For All the

689v --D--Rejoice in God's

558 --P--Earth and All

337 --II--Oh, What Their

693v --II--Baptized in (759s)

764v--G—Blest are They

(794s), 500, 17, 314, 339, 348,

171, 742v, 706v, 691v, 690v,

718v/778s

### Prayers of the People [15]

P or A: In communion with the saints of every time and place, we praise God's name in prayer, saying "Blessed are you, O God." and responding, "Holy is your name."

A: God of mystery, give to your church a spirit of understanding, that we may come to know your message as revealed in your Word. Enable us to live according to your will. Blessed are you, O God. Holy...

A: God of strength and mercy, be always at our side, for without your love and grace, we are but dust on the breath of the wind. Blessed are you, O God. Holy...

A: God of justice, inspire our leaders to govern according to Jesus' example, in which the weak are exalted and the strong made low. Focus our hearts upon love for you, rather than upon the empty powers of this world. Blessed are you, O God. Holy...

A: God of healing, lift the sick and the dying from the dark and lonely places of despair. We pray especially for \_\_\_\_\_. Blessed are you, O God. Holy...

A: God of compassion, through Christ we are called to forgive and to love beyond the natural limits of our hearts. Increase our compassion and caring for our neighbours, that we might live as Christ did. Blessed are you, O God. Holy...

A: With all the saints, we pray in the name of the most high, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Or [16]

#### *Presider or deacon*

As we recall the blessed ones who have gone before us, let us offer prayers to God who adorns the poor with victory.

#### *Deacon or other leader*

With the angels and archangels and the spirits of the blessed.

With the Virgin Mary, mother of our Savior.

With the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs.

With all the saints, witnesses to the gospel.

For N our bishop and N our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.



For all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages.

For the sick and the suffering the hungry and the thirsty, the poor and the meek, and all who are persecuted.

For the dead and those who mourn.

For our city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

For our ancestors and all who have gone before us in faith. Lifting our voices with all creation, with the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, for the triumph of Christ in the lives of your saints. Receive the prayers we offer this day and help us to run our course with faith, that we may swiftly come to your eternal kingdom. Glory to you forever and ever.

## Notes

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[1] Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965, p. 113.

[2] Marcus Barth, *Ephesians: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on Chapters 1-3*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974, pp. 97 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 98 f.

[4] In 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Romans 8:23, the Spirit is called an “earnest” or “pledge.”

[5] *Ibid.* p. 148.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 151

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

[8] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, p. 572.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 592.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 593.

[11] *Loc. cit.*

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 595.

[13] *The Church Year: Calendar and Lectionary*. Prepared by the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973, p. 148.

[14] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[15] [http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter\\_c.txt](http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt)

[16] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>