

**Thursday 2 November 2023**

# All Soul's Day



Greenacres Cemetery, Oldham  
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Since its foundation, Christians have recognised that the Church, the assembled people of God, is at its most perfect when it recognises its unity in God's redeeming love with all who have said, who say now, and who will say in the fullness of time, 'Jesus is Lord.' On this day, we remember those who have lived this faith and then passed from this world into the next.

**Sermon and some of the liturgy** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Remainder of the liturgy** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

All the hymns are hosted on YouTube. Please click on the links to hear them.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,  
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## The Gathering

We meet to remember our loved ones who have died in Christ, and to comfort one another in our sadness

In the name of Christ, who died and was raised by the glory of the Father, we welcome you: grace, mercy and peace be with you.

**All And also with you**

I have set the Lord always before me

**All He is at my right hand, and I shall not fall.**

Show us your mercy, O Lord

**All and grant us your salvation.**

For with you is the well of life

**All and in your light shall we see light.**

Hymn 1 [Amazing grace!](#)

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## Acclamation

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer,  
grant us, with all the faithful departed,  
the sure benefits of your Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection that,  
in the last day, when you gather up all things in Christ,  
we may with them enjoy the fullness of your promises;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

**All Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Word

A reading from the book of Ecclesiastes

I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, 'My splendour is gone and all that I had hoped from the Lord.' I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They

are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

*Lamentations 3:17-26*

This is the word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God**

**Hymn 2 The King of Love my Shepherd is** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

Jesus said, 'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him. 'Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

*John 5:19-25*

This is the word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God**

## **Sermon**

So here we are. All of us are here for much the same reason, having suffered the loss of someone we loved very dearly. Someone infinitely special has died. How on earth can we cope? What can we do to fill the emptiness? How can we move on?

Christians believe the Bible was inspired by God. So, through its ancient pages, God himself seeks to communicate with us, if we're willing to listen to him using the spiritual side of our nature.

So what *is* God saying to us through today's Bible readings? I'll concentrate on the middle portion of that first reading. Its opening words will surely resonate with

all of us here: 'I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.' These words resonate because we feel just the same. Although we frequently look for the special people we remember today, we think of phoning them, want to speak to them, hug them, kiss them, buy them presents, they're no longer around. That's surely *why* we, too, rehearse our agonising loss.

Thankfully the writer continues, offering us a way of coping, a way of seeing a way through the pain. He says: 'This is what I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.'

So let's look at these words, to see how we can apply them to ourselves. The **first** word of comfort in this reading says that God loves us. In fact, the Bible is clear that God is so characterised by love that he somehow *is* love. It gets better. God is infinite in power and scope; so when God loves us, the room for his love to help us to find meaning through our loss becomes very great indeed—even though, no doubt, it doesn't feel like it at the time.

Let's move on, and consider the **second** word of comfort in this Bible reading. The horror of grief can make us feel as though the person that *we* once were has also died. We feel as though we have been 'consumed'—as though *we* have been eaten up, and the people *we* were have also ceased to exist. The Bible says something very similar, but there is a twist: 'This is what I call to mind and therefore I have hope: because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed.' God is saying that the best antidote to our astonishingly painful sense of loss is to consciously bring to mind the wonder of his great love. By merely bringing to mind the love of God, he is enabled to actually become present to us. And the power within him—*and thence in us*—can and does quell the pain. It brings hope.

The writer then qualifies this truth with a third word of comfort to make the other two pale by comparison; for, **thirdly**, 'God's compassions never fail. They are new every morning.' Some loves diminish over time; that's obvious. The sign of a true and genuine love is not an emotion that never changes but the action the love generates seeking to customise and adapt, fitting itself to the need of the person who is loved. God is saying that he will never, ever stop loving us. So, in other words, he will adapt his love, continually re-shaping it to ease our on-going pain. We hurt and God will always continue to love us. We hurt and God stay there, remains there, won't budge from beside us. Each morning he is there.

We're here because we miss the wonderful people who have meant so very, very much to us, but have died. Into the pain of our separation, God speaks through the pages of the Bible, astonishingly ancient yet amazingly still relevant. They say that

God loves us and cares for us; the best way to cope when we feel we are being consumed by grief is to remember and live in his love; and that his love will never come to an end.

**Hymn 3** [O God, our help in ages past](#) [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## The Prayers

Almighty God, you have knit your chosen people together in one communion, in the mystical body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Give to your whole Church in heaven and on earth your light and your peace.

Grant that all who have been baptised into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to newness of life, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass with him to our joyful resurrection.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that your Holy Spirit may lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

Grant to your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

Grant to all who mourn a sure confidence in your loving care, that casting all their sorrow on you, they may know the consolation of your love.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

May we have strength to meet the days ahead in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those we love.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

Help us, we pray, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

Grant us the grace to entrust those whom we remember to your never-failing love which sustained them in this life. Enfold them in the arms of your mercy and remember them according to the favour you bear for your people.

Lord, hear us

**All Lord, graciously hear us**

We gather together these prayers, using the words that Jesus himself taught us:

**Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.**

Lord Christ our Redeemer,  
in the day of your coming raise us up,  
and set us at your right hand in the day when your greatness shall appear.

Keep the living by your grace and give resurrection to the dead.

We ask this in your name,

O Lord, our resurrection and our life.

**All Amen.**

## The Commemoration

You, Christ, are the King of glory,

**All the eternal Son of the Father.**

You overcame the sting of death

**All and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.**

You are seated at God's right hand in glory.

**All We believe that you will come to be our judge,  
Come then, Lord, and help your people,  
bought with the price of your own blood;  
and bring us with your saints to glory everlasting.**

In the Church, we read aloud the names of our loved ones. We do so in four batches during the following litany of prayers and Bible verses. Candles are lit.

I am the resurrection, and the life, says the Lord; those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

*(pause)*

We remember: **Group A**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort, deal graciously we pray, with those who mourn, that casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love.

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*(pause)*

We remember: **Group B**

Risen Lord Jesus, draw near to us as we walk the lonely road. Pierce our weary sorrow and gladden our heavy hearts as you go with us, and bring us in the end to your heavenly table.

The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

*(pause)*

We remember: **Group C**

Be present, Spirit of the living God, and renew us in our pain and grief; so that we, who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may rest on your eternal changelessness.

The Lamb who is seated at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

*(pause)*

We remember: **Group D**

and all those whom we remember today in the silence of our hearts.

*(pause)*

Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with the saints: where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting. You only are immortal, the creator and maker of all: and we are mortal, formed from the dust of the earth, and unto earth shall we return. For so you ordained when you created us, saying: 'Dust you are and to dust you shall return.' All of us go down to the dust, yet weeping at the grave, we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**Hymn 4 The day thou gavest** [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Let us pray, as we say together:

**All Hear us, O merciful Father,  
as we remember in love those whom we have placed in your hands.  
Acknowledge, we pray, the sheep of your own fold,  
lambs of your own flock,  
sinners of your own redeeming.  
Enfold them in the arms of your mercy,  
in the blessed rest of everlasting peace,  
and in the glorious company of the saints of light.  
Amen.**

**Hymn 5 The Nunc Dimittis** [\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)



Loving heavenly Father,  
may the death and resurrection of Christ,  
which we have celebrated in this service,  
bring us, with the faithful departed,  
into the peace of your eternal home.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ,  
our rock and our salvation,  
to whom be glory for time and for eternity.

**All Amen.**

The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

**All Blessed is the Lord, our strength and our salvation!**

Hymn 6 [Jesus lives! thy terrors now](#) [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

### **The blessing**

May God give to you and to all those whom you love,  
his comfort and his peace,  
his light and his joy,  
in this world and the next;  
and the blessing of God the almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon you and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

Neither death nor life can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Thanks be to God**