

## SERMON ALL SAINTS 2014

Let us be clear, we are celebrating saints with a little s not Saints with a big S! Although, no doubt, some of those also need celebrating but not venerating.

Saints are not a special breed, there is only one thing that marks out a saint from the rest; they are the ones who know that they need God, do something about it and go to him just as they are and receive him.

Psalms 31 verse 22 says "Love the Lord, all you his saints!" The word translated by the NIV as the godly or saints occurs 26 times in the Psalms and is one of several Hebrew words for God's people, referring to them who are or should be devoted to God and faithful to him.

We are shown the vision of all these people in the vision of heaven described in Revelation, saints filled with joy and peace as they lose themselves in worship and praise. This is the reward promised in the Beatitudes, a reward in the sense that it is the natural outcome of living so knowingly dependant on God's great goodness, love and guiding.

We are all called to be saints, and to do this we must desire God. We need to be dependent on him. We have to keep our minds on the God who is always there for us, however far we stray, where we have been, however often we lose our way. He will carry us safely home if we call upon him.

God promises great blessings to his people, but many of these blessings require our active participation. We can appropriate these blessings if we call on him and serve him. This God knows our needs and that our deepest needs are spiritual.

The reading from 1 John tells us who we are, members of God's family, and what we are becoming, reflections of God, and the rest of the chapter tells us more about this. The Christian life is a process of becoming more and more like Christ, and this process will only be completed when we see Christ face to face. God will purify us but again we are asked to participate to attempt to free ourselves of sin, it requires work, sinning no more.

People try many methods to remove the guilt of sin, in Revelation we are told that salvation only comes through Jesus. The blood of Christ removes the stain of sin, this is a picture of how we are saved by faith. There is the reassurance that here in heaven there will be no more suffering.

NT Wright, writes how he feels frustrated by the traditional thought and language about going to heaven, which he contests is not put forward in the New Testament as the main goal. The main goal, he states, is to be bodily raised into the transformed, glorious likeness of Jesus Christ. He also writes that all Christians, living and departed, are to be thought of as 'saints'.

But, I believe that as I have said before, we need to be active in our spiritual life. We need to be working, with the Holy Spirit, into that transformation we are called towards, to become more Christ like. How can we do this? What will help us reach that goal? Please think and pray about what you need. Use the Holy Spirit to help you with this process. When you have been shown the areas of your life that need work, seek ways to achieve the results you need. Talk to us, to other Christians, read books, join Bible Study groups, do whatever it takes so that you will be able to join with all the saints losing yourself in praise and worship.