

# All Saints Day (Year C)

How do we live out God's call to sainthood? This week's readings affirm that all who claim and trust in the promises of God are blessed. God's saints today – including all who are baptized into Christ – are called to look ahead, to know the hope to which God calls. And God's saints are called to live now in the presence of God's promises, working toward their fulfillment.

## Focus Scripture: Luke 6:20–31

Imagine the scene: Jesus goes up a mountain to pray and stays all night. The next morning he calls the disciples together and chooses twelve of them to be apostles (Luke 6:12–16). As they come down the mountain, there is an enormous crowd of people waiting for them, seeking healing. In this group there are other disciples, Jews (those noted as coming from Judea and Jerusalem) and Gentiles (those noted as coming from Tyre and Sidon). Jesus turns to the disciples and says, "Blessed are you..."

In this way the gospel of Luke begins Jesus' teaching commonly called the Beatitudes. These sayings are also recorded in Matthew 5:1–12. In Luke, this teaching marks the beginning of a period of instruction for the disciples before Jesus sends them out on their own (9:6). As Jesus teaches about the life of discipleship, he turns conventional human understanding upside down.

Luke reports Jesus' teaching as including four sets of blessings and woes. Poor/rich, hungry/full, weeping/laughing, and rejected/accepted form parallel pairings of blessing and woe. Jesus' use of the word "you" in each statement suggests that the crowd included individuals living in each of these situations.

As named in Deuteronomy 11:26–28, Jesus' hearers would have considered blessing to be a sign of God's favour and woe a sign of God's disapproval or judgment.

Jesus' message to those who would follow as disciples is one of astounding promise. Jesus speaks prophetically of the great reversal of human understanding that we encounter in the reign of God. As Jesus continues to teach, his message continues to reveal the surprising ways of God. For many in that crowd, Jesus' words may have seemed

full of justice and mercy. Others may have heard them as harsh judgment. Some may have wondered, perceiving that following Jesus was not going to be as easy as it may have first seemed.

Jesus' words call us and all the saints to gaze forward to the time when God's promises will be fulfilled. Those who weep now will laugh. Those who are hungry now will be filled. Those who are poor now will receive the riches of God's inheritance. With this future firmly in our gaze, the obstacles to faith become smaller, the path easier to navigate.

After giving thanks for the faith of the Ephesians, in **Ephesians 1:11–23** the writer affirms that, through the "seal" of the Holy Spirit, these saints in Ephesus are living in God's power and protection. The writer shares Paul's prayer that they will welcome Jesus the Christ as head of the church.

Written to encourage those being persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BCE, **Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18** relates Daniel's first vision and its interpretation. An angel explains to Daniel that four successive empires (or their rulers) will be destroyed by God and replaced by "the saints of the Most High" – those now suffering under Antiochus.

In **Psalms 149**, the psalmist calls God's faithful saints to praise God's saving acts and promises.

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There are blessings and woes in life, and God's saints are not exempt. Yet, when we faithfully place ourselves in God's presence, new possibilities for life and service become visible. We have a role to play, along with the saints of old, in the story of God's saving work. What might we do, as individuals and as the church, to live into God's promises?



**Focus Scripture**  
**Luke 6:20–31**

**Additional Scriptures**  
**Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18**  
**Psalms 149**  
**Ephesians 1:11–23**

**Almighty God,  
thank you for  
working in the  
lives of all your  
saints. Give us  
faith to engage  
the world  
according to  
your ways, living  
in hope and  
confidence of your  
gift of salvation.  
Amen.**

### The Focus for Ages 6–8

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Children aged six to eight will have experienced blessings many times in their lives, but they may not have reflected on the way that they can be a source of blessing to another person and another person can be a blessing to them. At least two things are important on this All Saints Day: an acknowledgement of saintly lives and a recognition that saintly behaviour is an option for all of us. You will have an opportunity to name saints during the theme introduction, including the names of the children, along with names from our tradition and from the Bible. Consider introducing the chil-

dren to the “saints” in the history of your own denomination and congregation.

The gospel story offers, very simply, four concrete and specific ways that mark the path of saintliness. In the context of the theme, these are four ways of being blessed and four ways of being a blessing. The song that follows the story will help children make the initial connection between being blessed and being a blessing, and the activities offered in the Respond section offer three concrete ways for the children to integrate the idea of being a blessing. Pray that the children will continue to grow in their awareness of God’s blessing on them in all they do.

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### Prepare

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#### Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on the focus scripture, Luke 6:20–31, and biblical background material (p. 1).
- ❑ Bring items for the worship area: *white cloth, white pillar candle, and Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of Luke.*
- ❑ Choose songs for gathering and closing worship from the *Seasons* music resources. Print music and recordings are available as MP3 downloads.
- ❑ Bring *candlesnuffer, matches, and CD player, if possible.*

#### Gather

- ❑ Bring *tealights and taper.*
- ❑ Bring *paper star shapes, hole punch, and length of paper ribbon.*

#### Engage

- ❑ Bring *resource sheet “You Are Blessed” (p. 5), a small bell, and a small stick.*
- ❑ Bring a *special party snack.*

#### Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the necessary materials.

- ❑ **Reminder messages:** *copies of resource sheet “Spreading God’s Blessing” (p. 6), felt markers or pencil crayons*
- ❑ **Blessing cards:** *construction paper (folded to create cards), crayons, pencil crayons, or felt markers; option: invite member(s) of pastoral care team to visit the group.*
- ❑ **Blessing poster:** *drawing paper, art supplies, glue sticks, sheet of poster board*



# All Saints Day (Year C)

## Scripture

Luke 6:20–31

**FOCUS** To know that we are blessed to be a blessing.

## Gather

**Welcome** the children and newcomers. Invite children to prepare the worship space with the cloth, candle, and Bible. Explain that white is the colour used on special days like today. This is All Saints Day, when we think about all the people who love God and follow Jesus.

### Opening ritual

**Gather** the children around the worship area and light the candle. Distribute tealights and ask children to name some people who show God's love by what they do or say. Take turns using the taper to light a tealight for each name said. Remind the children that anyone who loves God and follows Jesus is a saint.

**Sing or listen to** a gathering song from the *Seasons of the Spirit* music resources.

**Pray** (invite children to repeat each line after you)

Dear God,  
as we gather today,  
help us to learn more  
about following in the way of Jesus  
and showing your love. Amen.

Extinguish the candles as a sign that the gathering ritual has ended.

### Connecting life and theme

Distribute the paper stars and invite children to write names or draw images of those people that they know or have heard of who act in loving ways. Encourage them to include their own names on the stars, sharing times when they have shown care for another. Explain that all these people can be called saints because they all share God's love with others. Make a garland of the stars by punching a hole in a point of each star shape and threading these on a length of ribbon. Display in the meeting space.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Luke. Explain that in today's Bible story we hear about a time when Jesus was teaching people about what it meant to share God's love. In Jesus' teaching we hear the word "blessing." Invite children to share ideas about what the word "blessing" means. Talk about things such as when someone does a loving act it is called a blessing; or when someone does loving things for us, we feel blessed.

### Bible story

Use the resource sheet "You Are Blessed," based on **Luke 6:20–31**, to tell the story, using the bell.

### After the story

Invite children to find a partner and shake hands or make high fives with the partner as they sing each line of the following song. Repeat the song several times, finding new partners each time. Pause after each time of singing the song, asking the group to respond to the question: "How can we pass on God's blessing?"

**Sing** “We Are Blessed” (tune: “If You’re Happy and You Know It”)

We are blessed. Jesus tells us, pass it on  
(shake hands or make high fives).

We are blessed. Jesus tells us, pass it on  
(shake hands or make high fives).

We are blessed and we know it,  
and we surely want to show it.

We are blessed. Jesus tells us, pass it on (shake  
hands or make high fives).

**Celebration snack** Invite children to celebrate all the saints who have helped then learn more about God’s love. Say a prayer together and then share a special party snack. Imagine together how group members could encourage one another to live in “saintly” ways.

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## Respond

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Choose one or more of the following options.

- Reminder messages** When we do loving things for others, we are spreading God’s blessing. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Spreading God’s Blessing” and invite children to imagine these are reminder notes to place on a fridge door or message board. Talk together about some things that children can do or say to be a blessing to others and have them draw or print these in the spaces provided. Encourage them to post these notes at home as a reminder to participate in one or more of these ways to be a blessing.
- Blessing cards** When we offer God’s love to others, we are being a blessing. Talk with the children about some of the things that the minister and members of a pastoral care team do, especially



visiting people who are sick or sad. Or, invite your guest(s) to talk about this. Distribute folded papers and invite children to draw pictures and/or write messages to help bring a blessing to others. Make arrangements for the cards to be delivered by the clergy or pastoral care team.

- Blessing poster** In today’s scripture reading Jesus speaks about what the world would be like when it is filled with God’s love. Talk together about ways in which group members could share God’s love with others. Distribute supplies and invite children to draw pictures of people bringing blessing by sharing God’s love. Create a poster by gluing the drawings onto a sheet of poster board and display in the church hall, adding a title such as, “Being a Blessing.”

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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship area and relight the central candle. Recall today’s conversation about what it means to be blessed by God and to be a blessing by sharing God’s love.

**Pray** using the following prayer or one of your own.

Dear God,  
We know that you love us.  
Help us, as your saints,  
to be a blessing  
by sharing your love in the world. Amen.

**Sing or listen to** a blessing song from the *Seasons of the Spirit* music resources.

**Send** each child out with the words, “(Child’s name), God blesses you, and you are a blessing to others.”

Extinguish the candle.

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## Reflect

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Where did you and the children see signs of God’s blessing during today’s session? Were there any children who struggled to see themselves as

blessings? How can you continue affirming that they are saints, God’s precious ones?



# You Are Blessed

(based on Luke 6:20–31)

## Story Tip

Refrain from interpreting the story. Children can leave a story and later come back to it without losing the continuity of the story. They simply fill in the spaces with their imaginations.

*Practice the refrain, “God blesses you.” Each time you tap a little bell, that is their sign to repeat the phrase.)*

**P**eople. People. People. Everywhere you looked you could see people. There were mothers and fathers. There were children and babies. There were grandparents and uncles and aunts. There were sad people and hurting people. There were sick people and lonely people. There were poor people and hungry people. Everyone was there. Everyone had come to see Jesus. They had heard how kind and gentle Jesus was and they all hoped that he could help them. *(Ask children to name some hurts or pain that some of the people might have wanted Jesus to heal.)*

Jesus looked around and could see the hurt in many people’s faces. *(Pause.)* Jesus wanted to listen to them and answer their questions. He wanted to touch them and give them God’s blessing. And so Jesus turned to the disciples and said,

Look at the hurting people who have no money. When you are poor, you will know God’s blessing. *(Tap bell.)*

**Children:** God blesses you.

God doesn’t want anyone to be without what they need.

Look at the hurting people who do not have enough food.

When you are hungry, you will know God’s blessing. *(Tap bell.)*

**Children:** God blesses you.

God doesn’t want anyone to go without food.

Look at the hurting people who feel they have no friends.

When you are lonely, you will know God’s blessing. *(Tap bell.)*

**Children:** God blesses you.

God wants everyone to be cared for by their friends.

Look at the hurting people who are crying.

When you are sad, you will know God’s blessing. *(Tap bell.)*

**Children:** God blesses you.

God doesn’t want anyone to stay sad.

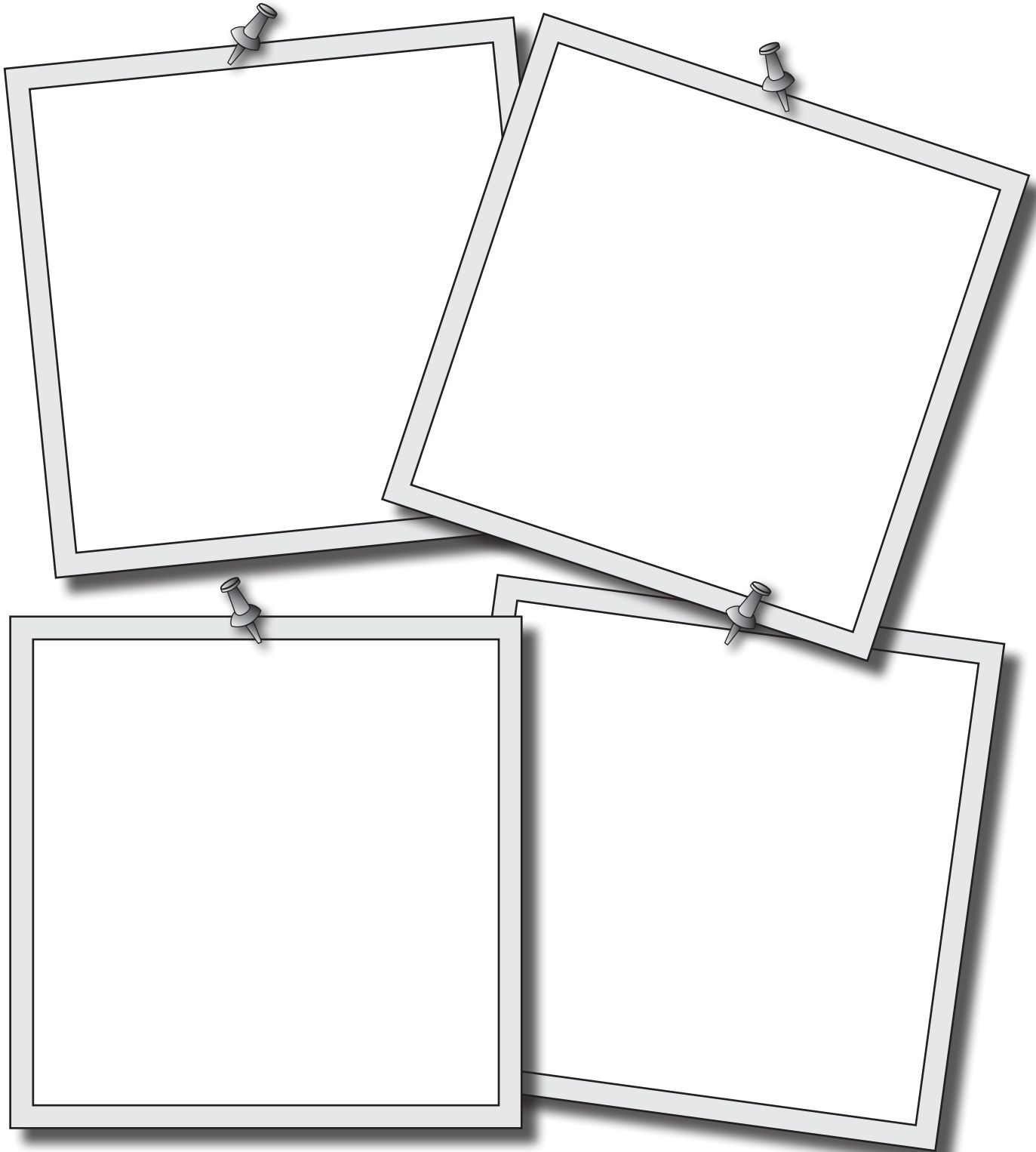
“Friends,” Jesus said, “God wants you to live together in love. And...always treat others as you would like to be treated.”

The disciples thought about what Jesus said. Jesus was teaching them about a world full of God’s love. When everyone has food, clothes, and a place to live; when everyone has a friend; when everyone is treated fairly and kindly; then everyone will be able to jump for joy!

The disciples thought about what Jesus said. Jesus was teaching them how to live together with love. When everyone has food, clothes, and a place to live; when everyone has a friend; then everyone will be so happy, everyone will jump for joy.



# SPREADING GOD'S BLESSING



When we do loving things for others, we are spreading God's blessing.  
Draw or print four ways we could be a blessing to others.