

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 9–11

Children aged nine to eleven will have experienced blessings many times in their lives, and they have probably been aware of times when they, or their actions, have been a source of blessing to another person. This session offers an opportunity for children to recognize and name the saints in their own lives who have brought blessings, and to learn about the saints in the tradition and the history of your own denomination and congregation. They will also have an opportunity to name themselves as saints, exploring ways in which they have been blessed and can be a blessing for others.

Jesus' teaching in the focus scripture reading from Luke, also known as the "Beatitudes,"

differs from the teaching recorded in the gospel of Matthew (the focus passage in the All Saints Day readings for Year A). In this teaching Jesus speaks about both blessings and woes. While the woes are mentioned in this session, the focus for the children is on the blessings and the concluding verse of the focus passage, a verse often known as the "Golden Rule." As you read the biblical background (p. 1), think about how you will respond to a child who asks about the woes. The Respond options focus on ways of being a blessing, which is evidence of "saintly" behaviour. Pray that the children will continue to grow in their awareness of God's blessings in their lives, and continue to recognize the ways in which they are blessed to be a blessing.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on the focus scripture, Luke 6:20–31, and biblical background material (p. 1).
- ❑ Prepare a worship area with *white cloth*, *white pillar candle*, and *Bible*.
- ❑ 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.

Engage

- ❑ *Option*: bring *images of saints* from your tradition, or a *storybook about saints*, with illustrations.

Respond

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

- ❑ **Reminder messages:** *copies of resource sheet "Spreading God's Blessing" (p. 5), 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.*
- ❑ **Bookmarks:** *copies of resource sheet "Saints of God Bookmarks" (p. 6), poster board or card stock, art supplies, hole punch, ribbon*



All Saints Day (Year C)

Scripture

Luke 6:20–31

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

Gather

Greeting Welcome the children and greet each one by saying, “Good morning, Saint (*child’s name*).” Point out the white cloth on the worship table and explain that today is All Saints Day in the church year calendar. On All Saints Day, we celebrate all saints, living and dead.

Call to gather Invite the children to join you at the worship table and ask a child to light the candle.

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

Pray the following prayer, or one of your own:

O God, we gather here
to learn more about you and how to be your
community.

Help us to feel your presence with us. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candle as a signal that the Gather ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Recall that on this day we celebrate All Saints Day.

- **Who do you think can be called a saint?**
- **What do you think a saint does?**

Discuss ideas together, perhaps introducing the idea of saints as those who embody God’s love and participate in loving acts that bring blessing to others. Explain that in today’s session they may discover more about saints.

Engage

Preparing for the story

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 words “blessing” and “woe.” Invite children to share ideas about what these two words might mean. 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. Explain that “woe” is a feeling of sadness when things are not right.

Have the children find **Luke 6:12** in their Bibles and ask for a volunteer to read the verse aloud. This verse tells us some background information, so that we can know how Jesus prepares for healing and teaching so many people. Read **Luke 6:13–17** aloud or summarize it for the group.

- **Where is Jesus?**
- **Who is with Jesus?**

Encourage the children to look at the text you just read if they are uncertain.

The Bible story

Invite volunteers to read the rest of the focus passage for this session, **Luke 6:20–31**, as the rest of the group follows along.

- **Which people does Jesus call blessed in this teaching?**

Explain that we could call these groups of people saints, even though they are ones whom we may not recognize as saints. Invite children to look at **verses 24–26**. Jesus gives a warning to those people who are content with their lives and who don’t help those in need.

- **How could these groups of people help others?**

Then have the group look at **verses 27–31**. These verses describe God’s way for us.

- **What do these verses say about how we should treat other people?**

Draw attention to **verse 31** and explain that this verse is sometimes known as the “Golden Rule.” It is a good summary of what it means to live in God’s way.

The Bible and our lives

All Saints Day is a good time to think about the blessings that we have, and to think about the people who have been a blessing in our lives.

When we share God’s blessings with others we are part of the whole community of saints. If possible, look together at the storybooks or images of saints to learn more about historical or contemporary figures. Or invite children to name some of the people they would consider to be saints.

- **What are some of the ways that we can be saints of God, following Jesus’ teaching?**

Respond

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.

- **Bookmarks** There are many saints in our lives who demonstrate what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Invite children to think of the saints in their own lives who have helped them follow Jesus’ teachings. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Saints of God Bookmarks” and follow the directions for making bookmark gifts for these people. Encourage the children to make several bookmarks each to give away. Consider sharing these with the leaders of your congregation as well as the people the children name.

Bless

Gather around the worship table and invite a child to relight the candle. Recall today’s conversation about what it means to be a blessing and what it means to be a saint.

Pray together this prayer or one of your own:

Dear God,
we give thanks for all of your saints.

Help us to be saints too, and
to be a blessing 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.”

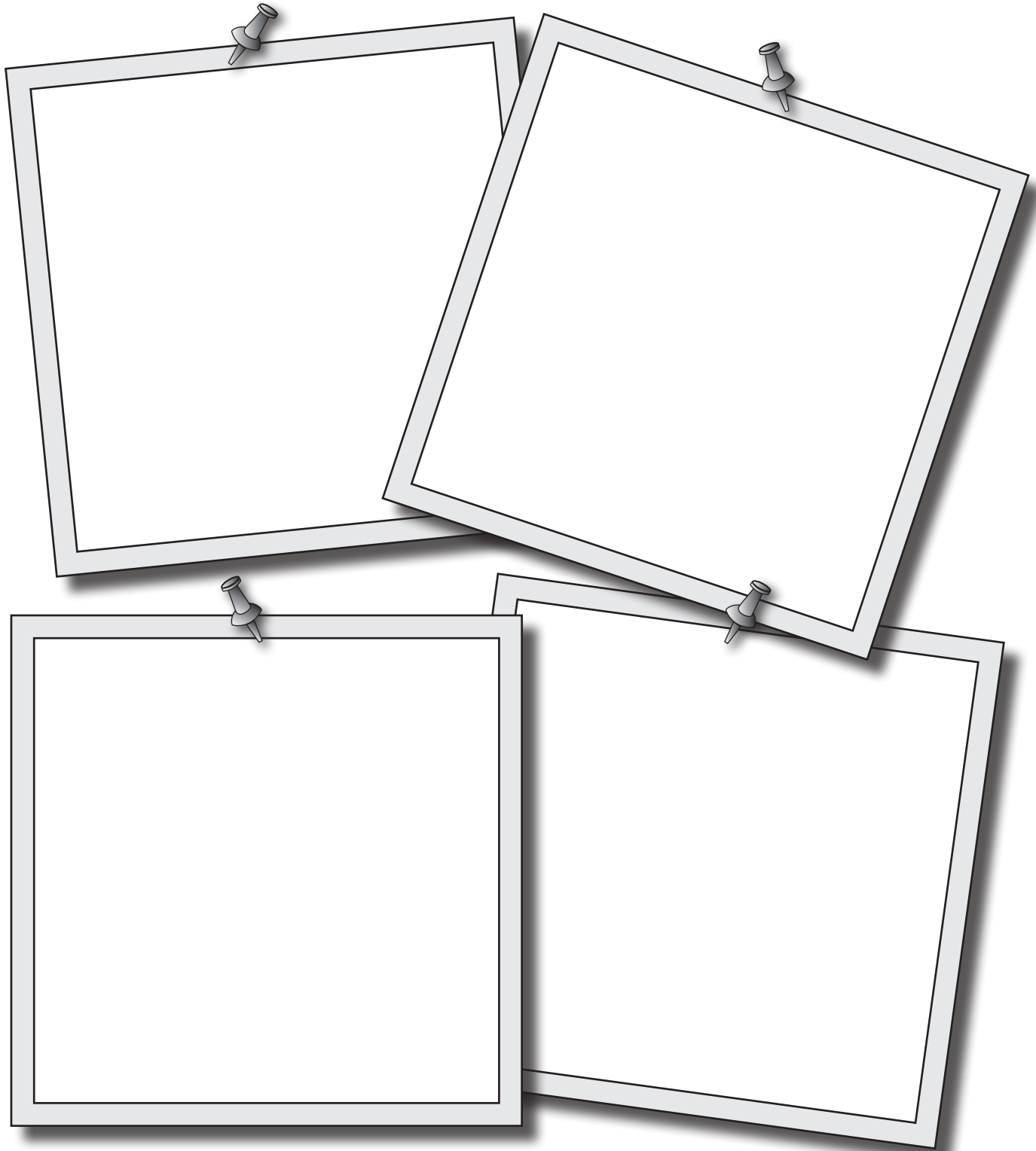
Reflect

In what ways did children show they are beginning to realize they are saints of God? 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?



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.



Saints of God Bookmarks

Materials

- card stock or heavy paper, cut into rectangles
- markers
- hole punch
- ribbon

Directions

- 1 Select someone you know who is a saint of God.
- 2 Print that person's name on one side of the bookmark.
- 3 On the other side, print: You are a saint of God.
- 4 Punch a hole near the top of the bookmark.
- 5 Put a piece of ribbon through the hole and tie it in place.
- 6 Deliver or send your bookmark to the person.

