

# 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 5–12

Children in this age group will have experienced blessings many times in their lives, although they may not call them by that name. They are usually more open to a wider definition of what blessings are than many adults. Many children are also aware that they themselves are a source of blessing to others. Most children, particularly if they live in openly affectionate and affirming homes, will have seen someone's face light up when they enter a room, or heard joy in another's voice when they say the child's name.

This session for All Saints Day will encourage children to reflect on how they can be a blessing to others and how they are included among the many saints of God. As you prepare this session, think about when the children in your group hear the word "saint." Do they hear it as part of the name of a con-

gregation or a school? Do they have friends who talk about Saint's days or being named after a saint? Be prepared to answer their questions about saints, since they may come with a different understanding of the world than is used in this session.

The focus scripture for this day is Jesus' teachings commonly called "The Beatitudes," based on the word "blessing." In Luke's gospel Jesus' teaching about blessings is accompanied by a teaching about woes. This session does not include verses 24–26. The children can explore those difficult verses at a more mature time in their lives. For them the focus is on the blessings that Jesus names and Jesus' teaching about how we treat one another. Pray that the children in your group will find a special connection to God through this study of blessings and saints.

## 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* 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 *glitter glue* and *name tags* on which you have printed "Saint," leaving room for children to add their names.

### Engage

- ❑ Prepare to tell story on the *resource sheet* "God Will Bless You" (p. 6).
- ❑ For memorization group, bring *Bibles*, *pencils*, *paper*, *scissors*, and *directions* (see p. 4).

### Respond

Gather or make the materials for the zones selected.

- ❑ **Art zone:** *copies of the resource sheet "A Saint of God" (p. 8), felt markers or crayons, fabric and yarn scraps, tape*
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** *copies of resource sheet "Spreading God's Blessing" (p. 7), felt markers or pencil crayons*
- ❑ **Cooperation zone:** *large sheet of poster board or mural paper, art supplies, used magazines, scissors, glue sticks*
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** *postcard-size pieces of card stock or sturdy paper, white tissue paper, white ribbon, felt markers, glue sticks, scissors; optional: copy of church pictorial directory*
- ❑ **Music zone:** *song "Friend to Friend" (p. 16 in Seasons Songbook, volume 7; #28 on Seasons Music CD, volume 7); print chorus lyrics on newsprint.*



# 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 any guests.

### Opening ritual

**Gather** around the worship area and invite a child to light the candle. Point out the white cloth and mention that the colour white is used on celebration days. Today we are celebrating All Saints Day, a time to remember all the people in the past and present who love God and are followers of Jesus. Distribute name tags, and invite children to add their names and decorate with glitter. Gather in a circle and welcome each other by saying, “Welcome, Saint (*child’s name*)!”

**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,  
we gather here today,  
to learn more about  
following in the way of Jesus  
and showing your love. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to show that the gathering ritual is over.

### Connecting with the focus

Recall that on this day we celebrate All Saints Day. Explain that saints are people who show God’s love and participate in loving acts that bring blessing to others. Invite children to name people they know or know about who show God’s love in the things they do and say. List the people they name on newsprint. Explain that during the session they will learn more about what it means to be a saint and to be a blessing.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Have a child bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Luke. Explain that the story for today comes from one of the gospels in the New Testament.

### The Bible story

Tell the story using the resource sheet “God Will Bless You,” which is based on **Luke 6:20–31**. Following the story, talk about it with the children, inviting their questions as well as asking them:

- **Who were the people in the crowd? Why do you think they came to Jesus?**

Note that Jesus had special words for some people. Invite children to look at the resource sheet “God Will Bless You” and name these people and what Jesus’ special words were for each group.

- **How did Jesus tell people to treat those who are mean to them?**

Then explain that the last words Jesus said remind us that we are to treat everyone as we want them to treat us. When we do this we are being a blessing just as God blesses us. That is how we can be saints too.

### Exploring the story further

To enable the children to explore the story further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.

**Song group** New words to the song “If You’re Happy and You Know It” provide this group with ways to think about being blessed by God. Sing the song or read the words below to the children:

If you're blessed and you know it, pass it on.  
If you're blessed and you know it, pass it on.  
We are blessed and we know it.  
And we surely want to show it.  
We are blessed. Jesus tells us, "Pass it on."

Invite children to sing the song, shaking hands every time they sing, "We are blessed." Pause after each time of singing the song to name ways that we are blessed or ways we can be blessings to others. If you have time, change the first and last line to "You are blessed, Saint (*child's name*), pass it on." Sing the song once with each child's name.

**Memorization group** Explain that **Luke 6:31** can be seen as a summary of all that Jesus taught. Provide Bibles, paper, pencils, scissors, and these directions:

- 1 Take a sheet of paper, a pencil, and a Bible.
- 2 Find Luke 6:31 and copy it on the paper, leaving space between the words so you can cut them apart.
- 3 Cut the words apart.
- 4 To memorize this verse begin by arranging the words in order. Read the sentence two or three times. Then turn over one word. Read the sentence again, saying the word that is turned over. Keep doing this until all the words are turned over and you are able to say the sentence without looking at the words.

### The Bible story and us

Invite the song group to sing the song several times for the other children, taking turns shaking hands as they sing "We are blessed." Invite the memorization group to say, in unison, **Luke 6:31**. Remind the children that they are saints of God too because they can bring blessings to others.

## Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Art zone: Circle of saints** God's saints are people who demonstrate what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Creating this mural will help the children place themselves among the saints of God. Look again together at the list of saints the children created during Gather and invite children to each choose a name. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "A Saint of God" (several per child) and invite children to decorate the people shapes with markers or crayons, fabric and yarn scraps, labelling one with a name from the list, and others with their own names and names of their friends. Create a "circle of saints" in the learning area by taping the hand shapes together.
- ❑ **Quiet zone: Reminder notes** When we do loving things for others, we are helping to spread God's blessing. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Spreading God's Blessing" and a copy of these directions:



- 1 Imagine that these are reminder notes to place on a fridge door or message board.
- 2 Think about some things that you can do or say to be a blessing to others at home.
- 3 Draw a picture of an action or print a description of an action in each of the spaces provided.
- 4 Post these notes at home as a reminder to participate in one or more of these ways to be a blessing.

- ❑ **Cooperation zone: Blessing collage** When we offer God's love to others, we are being a blessing. Talk together about ways in which children could share God's love with others. Distribute art supplies and used magazines and invite children to gather around a sheet of poster board or mural paper and create a group collage of words about and images of sharing God's love. Display in the church hall, adding a title such as, "Being a Blessing."

- **Outreach zone: Greeting cards** All Saints Day is a good opportunity to recognize the saints in your congregation by giving them greeting cards. Together look through the church directory, if possible, and encourage the children to each choose a person, or discuss together some possible recipients of the cards. Distribute pieces of card stock or heavy paper and have children print the following message on one side of the card: “God blesses you. You are a saint!” Show children how to decorate the other side of the card by gluing on a piece of white tissue paper, just smaller than the card, and then gluing two pieces of white ribbon to form a cross on top of the tissue paper. Make arrangements for distributing the cards.
- **Music zone: Movement poem** Jesus encourages us to rejoice because we are part of a great community of people who live God’s way of love, the community of saints that we celebrate today. Invite children to listen to or sing the song “Friend to Friend” (*volume 7*). Read the lyrics aloud slowly, as a poem, pausing after each line to invite children to create a movement to match the words. Then have them demonstrate the movements as you read the lyrics again. Conclude by encouraging the children to give one another “high fives,” saying, “You are a saint of God.”

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## Bless

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**Gather** Invite children to gather at the worship table. Light the candle, or ask a child to light it. Recall today’s conversation about what it means to be a blessing and what it means to be a saint. Invite children to share something from the activities in which they participated during Respond.

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

**Pray** 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.

**Blessing** Say to each child, “(Child’s name), God blesses you, for you are a saint of God.”

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## Reflect

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How did the children express their understanding of the meaning of saints? In what ways did children show they are beginning to realize they

are saints of God? Where did you see signs of God’s blessings during this session?



# God Will Bless You

(based on Luke 6:20–31)

When the story is about a teaching from Jesus, the children will be more engaged if there is something for them to listen for.

One night Jesus went up a mountain to pray. The next morning he chose 12 special friends, called apostles, to spend time alone with him. Now they were coming down to a level place. Many other disciples came to join them. Large crowds of people from all over were there. They wanted to hear Jesus teach. Some wanted Jesus to heal them. They crowded around, trying to touch Jesus.

Jesus looked at the great crowd of people. Jesus saw boys and girls, parents and grandparents. There were people who were poor and people who looked sad. Jesus also saw people who were rich and people who looked happy. All kinds of people had come to see Jesus.

“You people who are poor,” said Jesus. “All of God’s creation is for you. God will bless you.”

**Invite the children to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“You people who are hungry. You will have all you want to eat. God will bless you.”

**Invite the children to echo:** *God will bless you.*

Then Jesus looked tenderly at the people who looked sad. “You people who are so sad. You will be so happy you will laugh. God will bless you.”

**Invite the children to echo:** *God will bless you.*

Jesus continued, “When you have no friends, God will bless you.”

**Invite the children to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“When people say mean things about you, God will bless you.”

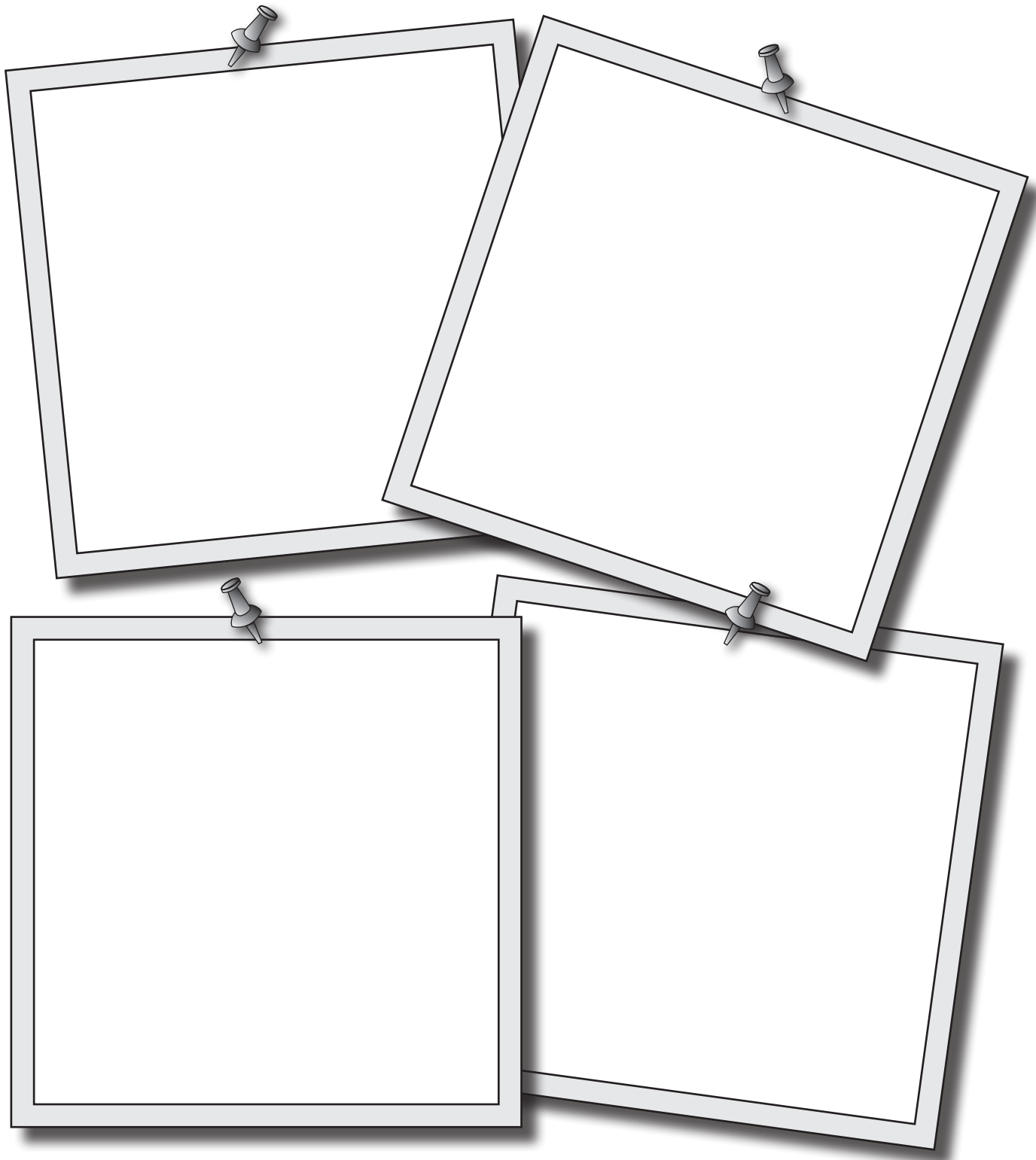
**Invite the children to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“Long ago people treated God’s prophets like that. If this happens to you, be happy for God will reward you.”

Jesus turned to look at all the people in the crowd. To everyone, Jesus said, “Do your best to love everyone, but above all, do to others what you would like them to do to you.”



# 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.



# A Saint of God

Saints are people who work hard to live God's message of love and to share it with others. Watch for saints of God this week.

