Reflections for 1ˢᵗ November 2020 – All Saints' Day

Sinners and Saints

A few years ago I heard a Lutheran minister from America speak about a church she had helped to found. It was an unusual church, set in an inner city area, with the purpose of to reaching out to people who often felt that churches had nothing to offer to them. They decided to call their church 'The House of All Sinners and Saints' – an unusual name, but it was chosen to make a serious point.

It was not saying that there are some people who are the 'saints', the 'good' people, and then others who are the 'sinners', the people who are 'bad'. Their intention was to say that we are all *both* sinners and saints – every one of us.

In our Bible story this week Jesus makes the contrast between a religious man who thinks that he is better than others and can judge them, and a humble man who knows that he needs God's forgiveness and love.

The truth is that we are all 'sinners' – we all fail, fall short, get things wrong, and hurt ourselves and others when we do not live as God calls us to.
And we are all 'saints' – in the New Testament the word 'saint' is used to refer to every person who belongs to the church, who knows that they have been chosen and loved by God.

So we are encouraged to remember the 'official' saints of the church, and remember those special people who have been 'saints' for us in our own lives, and we can thank God for them all.

And we can remember the strange good news that, in the love of God, we are all both sinners and saints – every one of us.

Revd John Waller

> God of holiness,
> your glory is proclaimed in every age:
> as we rejoice in the faith of all your saints,
> inspire us to follow their example
> in faith and hope;
> through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Revelation 7. 9-17; 1 John 3. 1-3; Matthew 5. 1-12

Story: 'The Pharisee and the Tax Collector' (based on Luke 18. 9-14)