

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

1 November 2020—All Saints Day

tionally, project onto the people we love. If it comes from a place of puritanical perfectionism, or neo-phariseeism, we have to be most careful lest we hide or hinder the grace, mercy, forgiveness and restoration that the gospel invitation of Jesus is really all about.

Lifting A Finger To Help. So far so good. We try to practice what we preach, and we don't place unbearable burdens on others. Or do we? The ministry and mission of the church belongs to everyone. Those called by God to specific roles, to quote Paul in Ephesians 4:12, are there to equip and enable everyone else to fulfil their tasks of Christian service and sharing the faith, making disciples, not to do the job for them! The Pharisees were good at pontificating, and certainly had a view about how things should be done, but were less inclined to roll their sleeves up and get their hands dirty.

Back Stage Crew. There again, the other side of the coin is behaving in ways that announce or publicise what we do, rather than humbly just getting on with it. The Pharisees loved their dressing up box, flaunting their high religious standards and procedures. They were no shrinking violets. They were self-publicists extraordinaire. When we watch a blockbuster film we see the stars performing, but we don't see the hundreds of people it takes to bring it to the screen, and most of us leave the cinema before the closing credits end.

Less Is More. Some of us are troubled by how much leadership and management language has crept into the church. Church leaders, preachers and teachers, are foremost disciples. We are all called to be disciples, followers of Christ. If we are leaders at all, we are servant leaders—which doesn't mean that we are subservient to other disciples, but that we serve Christ in calling others to follow him and serve him too. If we are teachers, Rabbi being the term used by and of Jesus, it is in teaching others what we have been taught by Jesus so they can put it into practice in their lives too, following the expectation of Jesus that we will go and make disciples, baptising them and teaching them everything that we have been taught! (Matthew 28:18-20)

SUGGESTED SONG

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqOnjmr9Ah0>

BLESSING

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. (Psalm 43:5)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and always. Amen.

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Dear Friends,

In our Baptist, Free Church or Gathered Church tradition we don't very often refer to the 'saints' like they do in other churches. Many churches are, of course, named after specific saints: St John's, St James' and the all-embracing All Saints! In the Catholic Church they have a lengthy process of 'beatification' before they will name someone as a saint. This all seems very strange to those of us who would rather refer to St Peter and St Paul with their more Biblical epithets as the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul. The discussion revolves around who you believe the saints to be.

The Apostle Paul addresses many of his letters in the New Testament to the Saints in the churches in various cities, Rome, Ephesus, and so on. It is clear that he understands being a saint in a very different way from the way some churches have come to understand being a saint today. As in most matters, it is best to stick to how the Bible sees things. The NIV translation of the Bible makes things complicated by missing out the word 'saint' altogether. So, for example, Paul writes to 'God's holy people in Ephesus' rather than the more accurate translation of the NRSV or ESV

which renders it, 'To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.' In his first letter to the Corinthian church he makes it clear who he means: 'to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours'.

The saints are, in other words, those who are Christians, anywhere and everywhere. If we have named Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and entered into a covenant with him through baptism into his church, then we are saints. We don't embarrass each other by going around referring to our Christian sisters and brothers as saints—St Jack, St Enid, St Alison, St Nigel, and so on—but we could do!

All Saints Day is a good time to pray for each other, the gathered saints of the church of Jesus Christ. It is also a good opportunity to think, reflect and give thanks for the saints of the church who we have known in the past, who have influenced us in our Christian walk. Saints are ordinary people who have given their lives in service and witness to Christ, and the call of Christ is for us to live our lives in this way too.

Zoom is the safest way for most people to meet during this time, and will continue to be the main way we'll meet for some time. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 11.00am today, after the 9.30am in-person Service in our building; and our Zoom Monday Prayer Meeting is at 7.00pm tomorrow. If you are able to join us, you will be very welcome. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There is lots more information on our website which you can find at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

CALL TO WORSHIP

O send your light and your truth; let them lead me.; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. (Psalm 43:3-4)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 43:1-5](#)

[Micah 3:5-12](#)

[Matthew 23:1-12 \(13-39\)](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

For All The Saints
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21GTTM2TIYA>

What A Beautiful Name
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5L6QIAH3L4>

PRAYER

Father God, on this day with all the saints in Heaven and on the Earth we praise your name and declare your glory, for you are the great and loving God in whom we put our hope and our trust. We thank you for the call of Jesus that has brought us into your family; we thank you for the work of Jesus through his life, death and resurrection, forgiving, restoring and healing us; we thank you for the Holy Spirit present in our lives, edifying and sanctifying us as saints in your kingdom. We thank you for all those Christian people who have graced our lives with your loving presence, and through our relationships with them and their influence on us, have made us the people we are today. Through your power and strength in our lives, may we reflect your holiness, that we ourselves might lead others into your loving arms. In Jesus' name, Amen.

TO PONDER AND REFLECT

One of the things I love to do at this time of year is play, over and over again, the song Goodbye October, written by Phil Thomson and sung by Adrian Snell. It first appeared on the album of the same name in 1976, but I first heard it when I was a student in the early 1980s. It was re-released in his album Father in 1990. The words really resonate as the seasons change so dramatically. In our family this is a time when we remember so many people who we have loved and

lost. Listen to the song if you are able to, and reflect on these words: 'Goodbye October. Did we see the colours change? Are we all too busy rushing through the year? Are we making time for Jesus, And the things He wants to teach us? Can he reach us, do we really want to hear?' I should add that Adrian Snell subsequently became a family friend, working several times with my brother (he gets a number of lovely references in Adrian's recent autobiography, Fierce Love: Music Leads a Lost Child Home), my Mum and sister babysat for Adrian and Sue when their children were young, and Adrian sang at my Mum's funeral service in 2006. I can recommend all of Adrian Snell's music; he also works as a music therapist and teacher from his home base in Bath.

SUGGESTED SONG

Goodbye October, sung by Adrian Snell
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwmRKLrMdE&feature=youtu.be>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Introduction. Our Gospel reading this morning is Matthew chapter 23. Although we focus on the first twelve verses, without the rest of the chapter we fail to understand the impact of Jesus' critique of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Their wickedness and hypocrisy is repeated over and over again, and by the end of the chapter we are left in no doubt whatsoever. Even within the first twelve verses the de-

scriptions of their behaviour leaves very little to the imagination. If you've never seen what phylacteries (small boxes containing Bible verses attached with leather straps to the forehead and arm) or tassels on garments look like, I would suggest watching Shtisel or Unorthodox on Netflix to see how various orthodox Jewish communities still wear and use them today. There are lots of criticisms levelled at the Pharisees and teachers of the law, but ones that should be lessons for all of us lest any latent religiosity or self-righteousness, from time to time, inhibit our own devotion or service.

Practice What You Preach. Those of us old enough to remember early computers before Windows will remember the acronym WYSIWYG—what you see is what you get. Early computers used code and symbols and until they found a way to show things accurately on the screen you never knew what you'd get. WYSIWYG is the opposite of hypocrisy. You get what it says on the side of the tin. When it comes to people, you know where you are with WYSIWYGs—they have integrity—their actions and behaviours match what they say. That is what we should be like as disciples of Jesus.

Lighten Those Burdens. There really is enough stress and responsibility in people's lives without deliberately adding to it. Some of the worst comes from the unrealistic expectations or sense of indebtedness that we can, even uninten-