

Sermon Given at the Anglican Parish of Kingscliff, 2 November 2025

Readings: Daniel 7:1-3,15-18; Psalm 149; Ephesians 1:11-23; Luke 6: 20-31

Theme: All Saints' Feast Day – The Courage to Be Saints

Grace, peace and love of God be with you all, Amen.

Friends, today we celebrate with joy the Feast of All Saints, traditionally marked on November 1. The saints are countless men and women, known and unknown, who sought to carry out the will of God lovingly and faithfully. They remind us, as St John writes, that *we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. But when it is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he really is (1 John 3:2).*

The saints are not perfect people in whom everyone saw God; rather, they are people who learned to see God in everyone. They trusted in God's boundless love and mercy and lived with courage and compassion. The saints lived the counter-cultural life of the beatitudes which we read and heard in today's Gospel: 'poor in spirit, meek, merciful, peacemakers, and seekers of righteousness...' (*cf. Luke 6:20-31*). Their stories inspire us — not because they were extraordinary, but because they allowed God's extraordinary love to live through them.

There is an old story about Rabbi Yehuda of Prague, who dreamed that he had died and was brought before the throne of heaven. When the angel read out the names of those who would enter the kingdom, Rabbi Yehuda's name was not called. He wept bitterly until the angel said, "Your name was called, but you did not recognize it. Many souls live on earth who never hear their true names spoken by another. They must wait here until they are silent enough to hear the King of the Universe call them." The Rabbi awoke and prayed, "Master of the Universe, grant me once before I die to hear my true name on the lips of my brothers and sisters."

All Saints' Feast invites us to hear our true names — the names by which God calls us when he created us (*cf. Psalm 139: Psalm 83*). It calls us to the courage of holiness, to live not half-lives of fear or comfort, but the fullness of who we are created to be. A palliative nurse, Brownie Ware, once reflected, after years of looking after dying people, that the greatest regret of the dying was this: *"I wish I had had the courage to live the life I was meant to live."* That is the call of sainthood — to live the life God means for us, to embody Christ in our time and place.

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

"God speaks to each of us as he makes us,
then walks with us silently out of the night.
Flare up like a flame and make big shadows I can move in.
Don't let yourself lose me.
Give me your hand."

God speaks to each of us still: *Embody me. Live me in the world of unbelief and violence. Give me your hand.*

The saints are that 'great cloud of witnesses' cheering us on — Saints James, Peter, Mark, Mary Magdalene, Teresa of Ávila, Oscar Romero, Mary MacKillop, Carlo Acutis, Jude, Cuthbert, Columba, Edith, Peter To Rot, and perhaps even 'Saints next door' like you and me. Holiness is not our achievement but God's gift; we become holy when we allow God to live in us.

Leon Bloy once said, "The only real tragedy is not to be a saint." So today, let us take courage. Let us open the doors of our hearts and let God embody us. For when we become the people God made us to be, we will set the world ablaze with the fire of divine love. **Amen.**

The Story by Rabbi Yehuda in full from *"A Ray of Darkness"* by Rowan Williams. (pp.153-154)

Rabbi Yehuda Loew ben Bezalel was the greatest rabbi of his age in Europe, the man who, in his house in Prague, created the Golem, the animated form of a man, to which he gave life by putting under its tongue a slip of paper bearing the unutterable name of God. One night, Rabbi Yehuda had a dream: he dreamed that he had died and was brought before the throne. And the angel who stands before the throne said to him, "Who are you?" "I am Rabbi Yehuda of Prague, the maker of the Golem," he replied. "Tell me, my lord, if my name is written in the book of names of those who will have a share in the kingdom." "Wait here," said the angel. "I shall read the names of all those who have died today that are written in the book." And he read the names, thousands of them, strange names to the ears of Rabbi Yehuda; as the angel read, the rabbi saw the spirits of those whose names had been called fly into the glory and sat above the throne.

At last he finished reading, and Rabbi Yehuda's name had not been called, and he wept bitterly and cried out against the angel. The angel said, "I have called your name." Rabbi Yehuda said, "I did not hear it." And the angel said, "In the book are written the names of all men and women who have lived on earth, for every soul is an inheritor of the kingdom. But many come here who have never heard their true names on the lips of a man or angel. They have lived believing that they know their names; and so when they are called to their share in the kingdom, they do not hear their names as their own, they do not recognise that it for them that the gates of the kingdom are opened. So they must wait here until they hear their names and know them. Perhaps in their lifetime one man or woman has once called them by their right name: here they shall stay until they have remembered. Perhaps no one has ever called them by their right name: here they shall stay till they are silent enough to hear the King of the Universe himself calling them."

At this, Rabbi Yehuda woke and, rising from his bed with tears, he covered his head and lay prostrate on the ground, and prayed, "Master of the Universe! Grant me once before I die to hear my own true name on the lips of my brothers (and sisters)."

Questions for Reflection:

1. Have you heard your own true name?
2. How can we help others hear their own true name and become 'saints'?
3. *"I wish I had the courage to live the life the life I was meant to live."* How can we live today and live it well so as to avoid this regret on our death bed which may be anytime?

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01 November 2025