

All Souls 2021 – St Thomas

During this, our service for All Souls Day, we remember the faithful departed; the infinite number of seemingly ordinary people who, over the centuries – have lived their lives - and died - trusting and striving to believe in God. People who lived through the ups and downs of life in the same faith as the well-known saints, but without the wider fame.

We will all have names and faces on our minds at this time; our own faithful departed, people for whose influence on our lives, we are deeply grateful, and give thanks to God. Our simply being here, is testimony to the good influence they have had on our lives.

On All Souls Day, we are also brought to reflect on our *own* mortality; the fact that we too will, one day, die.

This all may sound extremely heavy, dark and sad – even more so at a time of year when natural daylight is lessening, and hours of dark increasing.

However, there is hope...much hope! Our reading this afternoon from Wisdom gives us a taste of this hope, and reassures us that there *is* actually meaning in it all.

Sadly, in many cases, our loved ones may have suffered before they died; as we increase in age, it's quite likely that many of us are going to suffer too. The reading from Wisdom shows us how this is not the end of the story, and that human life does not inevitably end in pain and suffering. There is a better hope and future that God has prepared; one that we might actually be quite good.

The first 3 verses alone, give us 3 powerful, simple, unambiguous truths; firstly, that the souls of the righteous are in God's hand, secondly, they're safe and thirdly, they're at peace.

I will read those verses again:

'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever reach them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be a disaster,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace'.

Of course nothing can take away the searing pain of missing a loved one – but perhaps a little hope and light can be offered in this dark season. The passage goes on to say, that the souls of our loved ones will 'shine forth, and

will run like sparks through the stubble' – this is an image of *light* – and a 'lively' or 'life-filled' light at that. Perhaps, reflecting on these words and image - letting them sink in from the mind to the heart - we may begin to sense a little of God's hope and comfort.

And *we* can take comfort *too*; these words are for *us*, just as much, when the time comes;

'But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them...they are at peace...he accepted them...
they will shine forth ...grace and mercy are upon his holy ones'.

Amen