

A BRIEF MEDITATION FOR ALL SOULS' DAY 2021

'.....*the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God*' (Wisdom 3:1)

Most of us think and then speak in single sentences. The late Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks could think and then speak in whole paragraphs. As they were used to it, his family took this rare talent for granted. However, on phoning him in hospital and asking about the social implications of the Covid crisis, even they were amazed at the profound speech he reeled off without a moment's hesitation despite his frailty.

Tonight we gather to remember anyone who has died whom we want to remember.

The names of these people will be included in a list to be read out as a help to our remembering. Some names may be like single sentences: individuals; people we have known only briefly; even people we have never met. Some names may be like whole paragraphs: our parents; our families; groups of people from school or work.

We may find it difficult to think of all of these people at the same time. We need not be concerned about this. All Souls' is a day on which our intentions are all that count. And in this the ambiguities of the English language are a help and not a hindrance. We all intended to come here: our *intentions* as a purpose. We are all here to pray: our *intentions* as prayers.

Yes, our intentions as prayers. For many christians, not just in our world today, but throughout christian history, it has been good to remember the dead; but it has not been sufficient. We might say that, for many people, it is a natural christian instinct to want to pray for the dead. If we have been united in Christ with them while they have been alive, why should we assume that we are no longer united with them after their death - death which christians proclaim that Christ has conquered?

We may leave church and then recall someone whose name we accidentally left off the list. There is no need for concern. God does not remember people as single sentences. God does not remember groups of people as paragraphs. God does not need to remember for God holds in his hand all people and all time altogether.

| <i>‘Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand’</i> | |
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| <i>Verse 1</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| Time is filled with swift transition, Naught of earth unmoved can stand, Build your hopes on things eternal, And hold to God’s unchanging hand. | Hold to God’s unchanging hand! Build your hopes on things eternal! Hold to God’s unchanging hand! |

And so, as we serve those who have served us by remembering and praying for them, this apparently insignificant feast of All Souls’ can serve to remind us of the foundation of our faith:

‘Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him’. (Romans 6:9)

And in all our rightful remembering and praying, let us not forget that *‘..while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’.* (Romans 5:8)

‘God of infinite mercy and justice, who has made people in your own image, and hates nothing you have made, we rejoice in your love for all creation and commend all people to you, that in them your will be done, in and through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ AMEN.