

NOVEMBER 1ST---COMMUNION, ALL SAINTS DAY SERMON

SERMON TITLE: "IN EVERYTHING WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD"

How great. God has so much love for us that we are called children of God. How magnificent. When God appears we will be like God because we will see God for who God is. How absolutely astounding and good. Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the peacemakers, those persecuted for righteousness. How hopeful and powerful. The texts for this Sunday, All Saints Day, resound with glory and grace, unity and belonging, blessing times blessing times blessing. The contrast of such language cannot be denied when laid alongside the bombardment of political ads and fearmongering and social media yelling coming at us mere days before the election.

A picture of every tribe and nation united in worship seems naive if not laughable. Envisioning each other as God's children feels all but impossible when the message of our culture is one of winning and losing, for us or against us, completely right or completely wrong. Even Jesus' Sermon on the Mount riff with blessings comes across as more fantasy than the living, true word of God. What do we do with such a stark rift between the signal of the Bible and the noise of our world? Can we really look like the God we profess to follow when we are shaped by our professed secular tribes?

In his book, Resurrecting Justice: Reading Romans for the Life of the World, Douglas Harink, a Canadian commenting on the American political situation said: "Both sides are thinking that somehow or another getting this or that party elected is good for Christians. I think my point of view is neither side is good for Christians. Because effectively they have become idolatrous powers that Christians are looking to for salvation." Harink went on to say that he in no way believes Christians should not engage in politics and that there is an important role for such engagement. However, again and again, he emphasized that Christians look only to Jesus of Nazareth for redemption and that justice is accomplished by God through Jesus' death and resurrection. Our focus, our ultimate hope, ought to be the same as that of every tribe and nation: Jesus as the Christ.

I appreciated his comments and implications because it caused me to examine my own anxiety and hopes around this year's election. Indeed, much is at stake and I believe it is incumbent upon people of faith to participate and vote. But regardless of the outcome, Jesus will continue to be Lord of all, the Lamb on the throne of heaven, the Word made flesh, Emmanuel and God incarnate. We do not need to forget or discount this irrevocable truth. Further, we will still be called children of God and Jesus' blessings of the meek and the mourning and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will not be rescinded nor prevented.

All Saints Day provides us with a sure and certain hope that is embodied not solely in Jesus of Nazareth, but made tangible in the people of faith who have gone through many ordeals and remained steadfast in their loyalty to Christ and their love for neighbor and

world. I do not want to tether my hopes too tightly to any earthly power because to do so is to diminish the providence and omnipotence of God who has no equal.

This Sunday, All Saints' Day just days before our presidential election in the year of a global pandemic, we need to praise and love the One who died that we might live, the Messiah who ate with sinners and told us to love the unlovable and the unlovely in order that the world would know we are his followers. We need to remember the great cloud of witnesses and the members of every tribe and nation over the vast expanse of time who refused to succumb to the lesser, but so appealing, gods of vengeance, hate and cynicism. When I picture that glorious heavenly worship, I see some of the saints who entered the Church Triumphant this year. Saints like John Lewis who said at Montreat in 2015, "Never, ever let someone pull you down so low you hate them." The saint who said to all of us in words published in the NY Times the day of his funeral: "Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring."

I do not know what we will wake up to on Wednesday morning---or any morning for that matter. I do know, though, the Lamb sits on the throne in heaven, Jesus came to redeem the fallen, Christ will come again and nothing will be lost to the One who came to save the world. This beautiful, glorious truth enables me to worship this Sunday and tomorrow and the next day, even as I seek to do God's will, however poorly, but surely with the promise that I, that

you, that we, are so beloved we are called children of God and so we are.

Let us come to the table now and celebrate this magnificent gift and challenge. Amen and Amen!