

All Saints/Memorial Sunday, 2020
Lake Street United Methodist Church, 11 November

In every year, this first Sunday in November is a solemn day in our church. All Saints Day is a day when we celebrate the Communion of Saints – the continuity of Christ’s Church from the beginning until now – but is also a day of grieving for those saints who have made us who we are but who are no longer with us.

This year, though – the Year of Our Lord 2020 – has not been every year, has it?. It has been a year of explosions, which have shaken what many of us have thought were firm foundations. It has been a year of political division and rancor. It started with an impeachment trial – and whether you were for or against that specific endeavor, it has probably occurred to you with dread that this may become our new politics – and this week we will have a contentious and potentially violent presidential election.

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

This has been a year of racial reckoning for our nation as once again, and more forcefully than ever, our long and disreputable history of racial inequality has forced itself to the surface and burst. The dream of justice and equality that truly makes our nation exceptional has not been equally distributed, and sometimes a dream deferred will explode.

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

And it has been a year in which nature itself has exploded – hurricanes and cyclones and droughts and catastrophic wildfires have marked the warming of our planet with fury, while over the entire world has brooded a faceless enemy: a new virus that has killed over a million human beings to date, a quarter of those in our own nation.

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

And so we approach this All Saints Day grieving more widely and perhaps more deeply than usual.

Kyrie eleison. *Lord, have mercy.*

PRELUDE

“Kyrie”

– G. Faure

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, who has knit together your people in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son, Christ our Lord:

Give us the grace to walk in the steps of your saints, though the path take us into the valley of Deathshadow,

that we may find you beside us as well, and may emerge on the other side to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who love you;

through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

A SERVICE OF LAMENTATION

Our first scripture is from the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 12, verses 1-4:

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 12:1-4

12 You will be in the right, O Lord,
when I lay charges against you;
but let me put my case to you.
Why does the way of the guilty prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?
2 You plant them, and they take root;
they grow and bring forth fruit;
you are near in their mouths
yet far from their hearts.
3 But you, O Lord, know me;
You see me and test me—my heart is with you.
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
and set them apart for the day of slaughter.
4 How long will the land mourn,
and the grass of every field wither?
For the wickedness of those who live in it
the animals and the birds are swept away,
and because people said, 'He is blind to our ways.'

MEDITATION

"Lament and Injustice"

Pastor Jerry

One of the lessons that the Old Testament offers to us – a lesson that we resolutely ignore – is the importance of lamentation. Traditionally, we are positive thinkers, we Americans, full of optimism and energy. To lament feels like giving up, being a downer, losing that can-do spirit. This year, though, perhaps we can understand why it is important to lament. Sometimes can-do can't. Sometimes positive thinking is self-delusion. Sometimes the first thing we need to do is to face honestly the magnitude of pain in our world, setting aside our rosy goggles.

And, as Jeremiah demonstrates in this brief selection, one of the things to lament is injustice. Now, as then, the wicked prosper; the treacherous thrive; the downtrodden remain downtrodden; the deserving are left behind. All through the Hebrew Bible poets lament the injustice of human society – here, the psalms, Ecclesiastes, the entire Book of Job. And so today, in our service of remembrance, we lament injustice.

We're not very good at this. Or rather, we are only half-way good at it. In our desperately divided society, in which we hear only voices from our own side of the political chasm, we are very good at lamenting the injustice done to our side and the horrible things that the other side gets away with, but we're generally able to overlook or justify all the injustices that affect the other side only. But partisan lamentation is not lamenting. That's whining. For all our famous American positive thinking, we are as a nation remarkably good at whining. No, not just the people on the other side; all of us.

But today we will try again to raise our voices in genuine lament – not just for what inconveniences us but for all that perverts the cause of justice. Today we acknowledge that our society is not just, and remember that through that injustice this year, people have died.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

We light these candles today in mourning for our nation and our people.

We name today George Floyd and Breonna Taylor to represent all who have died as victims of racial injustice this year.

And we name today Officer Jonathan Shoop and Chief David Dorn to represent all those police officers who have given their lives this year trying to serve and protect others.

Hold these in your eternal care, O Lord, and have mercy on us.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“People Get Ready”

– Curtis Mayfield

Our second reading today comes from Psalm 6, verses 1-7:

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 6:1-7

- ¹ O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger,
or discipline me in your wrath.
- ² Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing;
O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.
- ³ My soul also is struck with terror,
while you, O Lord—how long?
- ⁴ Turn, O Lord, save my life;
deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.
- ⁵ For in death there is no remembrance of you;
in Sheol who can give you praise?
- ⁶ I am weary with my moaning;
every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
- ⁷ My eyes waste away because of grief;
they grow weak because of all my foes.

MEDITATION

“Lament for Illness”

We are a proud nation, but we have been humbled this year, brought to our knees. Psalm 6 is one of many biblical laments over illness, which only makes sense. For most of human history, disease has been the greatest danger to human life. We had almost forgotten that in western industrialized society. Modern science, through vaccines and antibiotics, have eliminated or tamed many of the diseases that once brought terror and unimaginable suffering to humanity. Smallpox was eradicated by vaccines; measles could be; bacterial infections tamed by antibiotics. Through science, we believed we had hamstrung one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. In our own culture, we have

been so successful in our fight against disease that some among us have been able to delude themselves into thinking that the very vaccines that have brought us to this place of security are harmful.

And then, this year happened. The new coronavirus called Covid-19 that has swept the globe has shaken the smug self-assurance of all but the most determined ostriches among us. Nearly all of us know someone who has had the disease. Many of us know someone who has died. A famous line from the movie *Jurassic Park* says "Life will find a way." It is pretty to think so, but this year we have been reminded that death will, too. And so today we join the psalmist in lamentation. We mourn those whose death has been hastened in their later years. We mourn those whose lives, full of promise, have been cut short in their prime. We mourn those who have died alone, separated from their families, gasping goodbye to an iPad. We mourn those whose deaths could have been prevented, and we mourn those who have died heroically in the fight against the virus.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES

We light these candles today in mourning for our nation and our world in the midst of the global pandemic.

We light this candle in memory of the million and more children of God who have been stricken by the virus and died – of every nation, race, color, and age.

And we light this candle to remember particularly those who have died from the virus through trying to serve others – doctors, nurses, therapists, support staff, EMTs, and others.

Hold these in your eternal care, O Lord, and have mercy on us.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Isolation Waltz"

– Stelios Kerasidis

A SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

Our third scripture comes from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 13-18:

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. ¹⁶For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

MEDITATION

"Grieving with Hope"

The shocks of this year – being confronted with injustice in society and humbled before a merciless virus – are nothing new to humanity. Injustice and disease have always been with us, and more oppressively than now. For most of our ancestors, the horrors of 2020 constituted “Tuesday.” All the Bible was written in a time when death was closer than it has felt to us now. And yet, even in that time when Death was a familiar grisly companion, the Apostle reminds us in 1 Thessalonians that Death is at most a temporary condition. Christ rose from the grave, and in his resurrection is a promise to us all. This world – this vale of soul making – will exact its due from us. Death will find a way. But there is a further way, beyond death, through Christ’s resurrection.

So we will grieve those whom we love, because it is not possible to love without grief, but we do not grieve as those do who have no hope. We grieve as those who, for a time, must be carried by hope, because the weight of grief would otherwise prevent us from our journey. In Genesis 48:7, the patriarch Jacob remembers the death of his beloved wife Rachel, and he describes his grief in this way: “As we came from Paddan, Rachel, alas, died in the land of Canaan, on the way. And I buried her there, at Ephrathah, for I still had far to travel.” Today we remember those whom we love and see no more, but even as we mourn, we mourn with hope, remembering two things: First, their journey is not over. They died on the way. And second, nor is ours. We still have far to travel. So today we mourn, with hope, so that tomorrow – or perhaps the next day, or the next year, or however long it takes – we will lift our feet more easily on the path.

We turn now to the specific mourning of our congregation, as we read the names of those of our church family who have died in the past year and light candles in their memory.

Mary Jane Cardinal

Marcella Schaefer

Marion Faulkner

Kathi Jewell

Roger Dieringer

Shirley Bystedt

Robert Schneider

Betty Taggart

Lena Thompson

Bob Darling

We pause for a moment of meditation now, as we invite each of you, wherever you are, to name those for whom you grieve this year. If you have a candle at home, you may wish to light that as we light this final candle to represent all our several griefs.

SPECIAL MUSIC

“Danny Boy”

– Traditional

PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we bring you our grief.

You who wept at the grave of Lazarus, weep beside us.
You who knew the death of those you loved,
You who faced the same death that we ourselves face,
Share our tears, share our anger, share our love.

And then, Lord, walk with us through to the other side.
Not that we may forget our grief, but that in time we may bear it more lightly,
May build from it greater compassion for others,
May learn from it a deeper kinship with all humanity.
I pray that we may become like you in our love and our grief
and that, like you, we may rise – not only above grief, but above death itself.
Made like you, like you we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

LORD'S PRAYER

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Almighty God,
Creator of heaven and earth:
God of Abraham and Sarah, God of Miriam and Moses,
God of Joshua and Deborah, God of Ruth and David,
God of the priests and the prophets, God of Mary and Joseph,
God of the apostles and the martyrs,
God of our mothers and our fathers,
God of our children to all generations.
And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

Renew our communion with all your saints,
especially those whom we have named before you.
Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,
strengthen us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us,
looking to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.
By your Spirit make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world,
until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

Amen.