

All Saints' Day—Year A
Revelation 7:9-17
Psalm 34:1-10, 22
I John 3:1-3
Matthew 5:1-12

Here we are just **2 days before the election**. Our country is **wound tight**, as **tight** as I can remember in my lifetime. People are **on edge**, **anxiety** is high. I ran across this headline this week: **'Guns, Protests And Elections Do Not Mix': Conflict Experts See Rising Warning Signs** (NPR News, October 29, 2020). In the story, both sides said *they wouldn't incite violence*, but that they *would be ready to respond*. It's a scary time. The chance of something going awry that sparks violence is definitely in the realm of possibility. *For both sides*, there is the belief that if the other candidate wins it will be **catastrophic** for the country. And *for both sides*, there is another **longing**, a **longing** that has intensified during the pandemic, and that's **the longing to return to normal**. Politically speaking, *both sides* have **their version of normal**.

For those who will **support President Trump**, it's the **longing to return** to the **normal of February 2020** when the *economy was strong*, *unemployment* stood at 3.5% (the lowest in 50 years), and *real wages were actually rising* ("US 2020 Election: The economy under Trump in six charts" BBC News, September 23, 2020).

For those who will **support former Vice President Biden**, it's the **longing to return** to the **normal of administrations prior to 2016** when **norms** and the **institutions of government** were **honored** and **rhetoric wasn't nearly so hot**.

Everyone has a **version of the normal** they're **trying to get back to**; there is **nostalgia** for a brighter time.

Earlier this week, I ran across this quote from **Sonya Renee Taylor**, *a poet, activist, and transformational leader*. Back in April, she recognized this **longing to return to normal**, and she countered with this: **"We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was never normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, My friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature."** ([Sonya Renee Taylor, Instagram, April 2, 2020](#))

And *that* is where I want *us* to **cast our anchor 2 days before this election**. Whatever hope you hold *today* that *Tuesday* will **bring a return to normal, RELEASE IT**.

First of all, *let's know right now* that, *more than likely*, **we will not have a clear resolution to this election on Tuesday**. It's **going to take time** to sort out results; *we* will need to **exercise that old-fashioned virtue of patience**.

Secondly, **God is calling us forward**, not backward. In every way possible, **God is inviting us to join in the "stitching of this new garment that will fit all of humanity and nature."** *No matter who is elected*, our work as **stitchers of this new garment** must go on. And this is where **All Saints' Day** lifts our eyes to this **higher call** and **more expansive vision**.

As **the people of God**, this is *not our first rodeo*. Our reading from **Revelation** today reminds us that **we are a people quite accustomed to coming through great ordeals**.

Revelation also reminds us that “**Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!**” The **healing** and **wholeness** for which we long, *these belong to God*, NOT to Mr. Trump, nor to Mr. Biden. *We are anchored in a deeper place; we keep our eye trained on “the Lamb at the center of the throne” who is also our “shepherd,” and we trust our “shepherd” to “guide us to the springs of the water of life.” We trust “God to wipe away the tears from our eyes.” No matter what transpires in this life, God’s reach is wider, God presence is deeper, God’s love won’t let us, or this world, go.*

The **saints** have *always known this*, and the **saints** have **never settled for normal**. During their **lifetime**, *on this side of the veil*, they were always **odd ducks** with a **greater vision** of **what could be** and a **greater capacity for love** than the rest of us. And in their **life now**, amongst that **great cloud of witnesses**, they **cheer us on** and **encourage us** and **push us** and **pull us** and **compel us** to be “**stitchers of this new garment**” that **Jesus** calls the **kingdom of God**. These **saints** remind us that among “**the changes and chances of this life**” (BCP, 133), amidst the **vertigo** that *is 2020*, **there is something deeper, something solid, something unshakeable to which we can hold fast**. And when we **anchor ourselves in this Presence**, when we **yoke ourselves to Lamb**, when we **abide there with Jesus** and **drink from the springs of the water of life**, *then* we are **filled with the peace that passes all understanding** that the **world doesn’t understand**, and that sounds *awfully close* to those “**ineffable joys**” that **God** promises named in our **Collect** this morning.

I John also gives us a **guidepost** today. In that letter, the writer says this: “**Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.**”

There are **four movements** here. *First*, we are **already God’s children, right now**. *Second*, we are **in process**, and what we *will be* isn’t known yet. *Third*, **Jesus is still revealing himself**, in new ways and in new circumstances, and as we see him in the circumstances *we* confront, he reflects *back* to us *who we truly are* and *how we are to be* in our living, breathing, flesh-and-blood lives. And *lastly*, **learning how to live in communion with Jesus, and then, learning how to extend that communion to others is always a purifying process** as we **confront all those places in ourselves that would block the flow of love**.

And finally, this **All Saints’ Day** gives us the **beatitudes** from **Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount**. I can’t think of a better text to **anchor us right before this election**.

If you are feeling **poor in spirit right about now**, know you are **blessed**; welcome to the **kingdom of heaven** and know you are not alone.

No matter how this election turns out, **half of our country** is going to be **mourning**. Can we have **compassion** for **one another’s grief**? What if we **joined God** in the **divine work** of **comforting those who mourn**?

Society tends to **operate on a zero-sum game**, **rewarding the strong and powerful, declaring them** as the **winners**. Can we **dare to believe**, as **Jesus** proclaims, that **blessing** belongs to the **meek** and the **merciful**, and that it’s actually the **pure in heart** who have the **capacity** to truly see **God**?

Can we join ranks with **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and understand** that God will **feed us** in this work in ways that will utterly astound us? On our **own steam, we burn out**, but when we are in **alignment with God**, and our **work for justice springs from that place**, then we are **given** the sustenance we need for the long haul; indeed, we are **filled** by it.

Jesus continues, **“Blessed are the peacemakers...”** If ever God was **calling us to be peacemakers, it is now**. As the *days ahead* unfold, we have to **embrace our role as peacemakers**. We have to **cultivate that energy within ourselves**, and we have to **manifest it in our words and in our deeds to our neighbors**.

Staking out a place that refuses to demonize the other, however we define that other, staking out a place that refuses to strip dignity from another who, like you, is also made in the image of God, refusing to engage in the demonizing, diminishing postures and behaviors so championed in our current culture will NOT make you popular. And so it has always been for anyone who dares to speak a different vision, as the prophets did, or look upon others with the eyes of mercy and compassion and piercing clarity, as Jesus did. Jesus gets it, and so he reminds us: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

None of the beatitudes are fun places to be, but they are surely the **places we are called to go** once we sign-on to **follow in the way of Jesus**.

Right now, the **world needs** as many of us to be **beatitude people** as possible because it will be **those anchored in the deep places who help us, as a society, weather this storm**.

Beatitude people are supremely **“stitchers of the new garment that humanity and nature” needs**, a new garment that God longs to provide. *Remember*, God has been stitching clothes since the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, but it's sort of *all-hands-on-deck* time now; **God needs us to join in this work, crafting a garment truly befitting of the kingdom of God**.

And we won't be alone.

The whole communion of saints is **joining us, weaving the fabric of our sweet mystic communion, ever stronger, ever tighter, ever more beautiful**. Saints *great and small*, saints known across the ages *and those known only in our own hearts*, are **joining us**.

Come Tuesday, come Wednesday, come all the days after that, our call is the same, to be **beatitude people, anchored deep, with eyes trained on the Lamb, trusting** that, as we look out upon the world, it is **Christ himself who is looking through our eyes with mercy and compassion and clarity**.

Our call is to be **beatitude people, our hands at the ready “stitching that new garment” that will truly fit us all**. Amen.

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