

All Saints Sunday 2018

Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 24

Revelation 21:1-6a

John 11:32-44

Do we have a future?

It's a scary question,
But at least for some of us,
It's hard not to wonder.

When you consider the massacre of the faithful
At the Tree of Life synagogue a week ago,
When you read, day after day,
one report after another about climate change,
Each one worse than the one before,
When you watch – wherever you place yourself
On the political spectrum –
The polarization and vicious maneuvering
As we approach another election,
How not to wonder?

We have entered an ever more treacherous
And difficult world,
Filled with heartbreak and disease.
Do we have a future?

Yes –
I believe we have a future
And
I know the future is uncertain
In a world more threatened and threatening
Than we like to contemplate.

How will we live in this divided and dangerous world?

We will live as the saints,
I hope.

It is in living as the saints
That we work together with God
To bring forth
The unfolding future –

A future with hope.

Living as the saints,
Who see,
In a landscape torn apart by divisions
And ravaged by disaster,
The dwelling place of God.

The saints have double vision.
They see the facts of life
And the truth that gives life.

That double vision means
The saints lead lives of freedom and abundance
Even in the midst of fear and danger and disaster.

The saints with their double vision
See, even as they confront the reality of climate change,
a new heaven and a new earth
where all is made new and whole.

The saints with their double vision see,
underneath all our divisive and hostile talk,
the oneness of all God's children.

The saints with their double vision see,
even in the elected leaders they hate the most,
the wounded, frightened, and inadequate children of God –
not to forgive, not to condone,
but simply to acknowledge the humanness of us all.

The saints never acquiesce or accommodate –
But they see in layers.
They have double vision.

The saints still live in this world,
And work in this world.

They don't offer empty words instead of bread,
Or a smile instead of place to live.

They know God's unfolding future
Will only appear when we work for it.
But they have the strength to hold the vision
As they work.

That is what makes them saints.
And what is true for them
Can be true for us.

We are the saints for now,
Keepers of the tradition,
Inheritors of the wisdom and promise
Of the saints of old.

Daunting as it may seem,
We are called to be the saints for this time.
We are called to see with double vision;
We are called to open up a space within us and among us
Where God can come and be at home.

God wants to make a home in our broken hearts.
God wants to make a home in our broken world.
God wants to make new saints
With whom to keep the light alive.

God lives among the saints and will not leave them.
God brings the saints freedom
And abundance,
Meaning and purpose,
Joy.

Though their lives might seem as tightly closed as a tomb
God brings them back into the light.

This is a miracle,
And it is as true for us
As it was for the saints of old.

I know it doesn't look like it's working.
If you look around you,
It's hard to see
Freedom and abundance and joy.
That's why it's hard to follow in the path of the saints.
The double vision of the saints
The free and fearless action of the saints
Takes discipline
And courage
And a willingness to risk.

What does that look like,
In the real world we live in,
A world of terrible crime
And entrenched injustice
And sorrow that cannot be explained or understood
A world that may only rarely seem,
In the words of one of the saints,
Charged with the grandeur of God?

What does it look like
To live as the saints?

Heroic acts, sometimes.
Humble acts, more often than not.
Small decisions.
Fine discernments and distinctions.

When you face a small choice today,
Will you believe in the power of love
To heal and make whole?
If you choose to believe in love,
Will you take a small step
To make it thrive within you,
Between you and another person?
Will you believe that change is possible?
If you choose to believe that you,
And the world, can change,
Will you start changing today?
Will you look for the face of Christ?
If you do, will you find him
In some unexpected place?

As unexpected as the darkness of the tomb?

Could your story, in some way,
Be a Lazarus story?

Lazarus was really dead.
Dead and sealed in a tomb.
We may be looking death in the face,
We may have lost our dearest loves,
But we who are here,
Still have life and breath.

Lazarus was dead.
But, dead and sealed in a tomb,

He still heard a voice
Calling his name,
And he made a choice,
A choice for love,
A choice for change,
A choice for Jesus, his friend.

Even in the darkness of the tomb,
Shut and sealed,
He believed
In the life that waited
Outside the door,
A life he could not see
Until he walked into it.

But he walked, anyway,
Taking his first steps in the dark.
Until he had the courage
To walk in the dark,
He was stuck in the tomb.
But he heard the voice,
Took that first deep breath,
And walked.

He became, in that moment,
A saint.
Courage to embrace life
In the midst of death,
Vision to see light
In the midst of darkness,
The will to take a step
Even though he was still tightly bound.

When he did these things,
He became the partner and helper
Of the one who set him free.

There is no miracle
Without the voice of God.
But this is true as well:
There is no miracle
Until Lazarus responds.

And we can do that too.
We are the saints of today
As soon as we hear the voice,

Take in the breath of life,
And start walking in the dark.

Sometimes time stands still
As we do the hard work
Of becoming saints.
There are times when it takes all our courage
To believe that the voice we hear is the voice of Jesus.
Sometimes even when we know his voice,
All we can do is start to breathe again.
And sometimes we find that putting our feet to the floor
Requires every ounce of courage we can summon.
These too, are the actions of the saints.

If you are here today,
Most likely it's because you have made the choice,
Whether you know it or not,
To see as the saints see
To live as the saints live,
To give as the saints give.
Otherwise why would you come?
You are here
Because you believe there is a future,
You believe change is possible,
You believe we can make a difference.

It really is a choice.

Living into the freedom
Of those who let Christ set them free
Living into a world where we see God hidden and active
And making all things new
Living into the promise of the future –
This is what our life together looks like.
This is why we are here.

We are here to bring the promise of God,
The promise of a future of meaning, hope, and freedom,
To each other and the world.
We are here to show that the saints of God
Are alive and well.

We show this as we make the promises of baptism,
We show this as we affirm the promises of the creed,
We show this as we show up here,

In this community of the faithful
Within the communion of the saints.

This place of double vision,
Where we see the broken world
In all its pain,
And see the promise
Of a world made new
By the presence of the holy.

Wait for that double vision,
Work for it in prayer,
Look for it when you serve those in need.
Listen for it in the music.
Hear it in the voices of children.

The home of God is here, among us.

The saints of God are here,
preparing for the future,
Because,
No matter what,
The future is the home of God.