

25th Sunday after Pentecost – 6 November, 2016  
Sermon preached by the Rev. Daniel Vélez Rivera  
Lessons: Daniel 7:1-3,15-18, Psalm 149, Ephesians 1:11-23, Luke 6:20-31

The month of November is full of holidays and Holy Days honoring the past, the present and the future. Last Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, was the actual feast of All Saints which we are commemorating by bringing photos of ancestors and beloved saints deceased and placing at the foot of the altar. All Saints is followed by Veteran's Day, followed by the feast of Christ the King, and lastly Thanksgiving. Amid these Holy Day and holidays is, as if you didn't already know, Election Day. The secular holidays like Veteran's day honor the memory of those who have given their lives in service and Thanksgiving also looks back to the immediate harvest for which we thank God; but the feast of All Saints and Election Day encompass the past, present, and future.

Like All Saints and Election Day, the readings that you will hear in the month of November address the past, present, and future of God's reign. We should not lose sight of the fact that regardless of chronological time, God's presence was, is and will continue to be constant. What the lessons for the Holy feasts in November have in common with the secular celebration of Election Day, especially in a presidential election year, is that we, and our ancestors before us, look back to gage how an administration handled itself; to the present as we compare what was, is, and could be; and to the unknown future - which every politician in America claims to divine as November 8<sup>th</sup> approaches. As this nation responds to an uncharacteristically undignified presidential race process, come the day after Election Tuesday, we like our ancestors before us, will live into a new day with new challenges regardless of which candidate emerges triumphant. The readings in the upcoming weeks provide biblical references and directions for us. We are given the wisdom of perspective, to take a step back before plunging forward, and we should be reminded that regardless of the outcomes of this worldly election that God will sustain us, once again, with His righteous love and dominion over everything. The biblical perspectives offer a lens that show God's constant providence and support. Regardless of the politics of fear, distress, or distrust being thrust upon us, our faith in Christ will sustain the saints living through these deeply polarized times. The saints before us witnessed hardship and political distress, and yet they survived.

Jesus is quoted in Luke's gospel (Luke 21:10) with these prophetic and true words, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against Kingdom". The Bible gives us a balanced perspective, although not always in the same book or chapter, so Christ's words in Luke are counterbalance with God's words for the people through the prophet Malachi (Mal 4:2), "But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings". Jesus also responded to the angst of the people with hope when he said "be not afraid, I am with you always until the end of time". Later this month on Christ the King Sunday these

words will ring true, and on that Holy Day we will be reminded that we belong to a higher and divine Lord who gave the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The words from the Beatitudes in Luke's gospel invite us to embrace righteousness and to become better citizens by blessing those who are different than us. In the sequence of the narrative in Luke's gospel, Our Lord had just chosen his twelve disciples before delivering this famous Sermon on the Plain and therefore, in his teaching there was both a mystical message of that he conveyed to the people in that moment and a call to action on behalf of the people in the world living at the margins. On the one hand, we have the Son of God shaping a mystical kingdom view but he did so as he spoke to regular people like us out in an open field somewhere in Israel. So, when Christ proclaimed blessings on the poor, the hungry, the bereaved, and the marginalized he was proclaiming the presence and action of God's blessing over all the saints past and present, because when you think of it, we are all poor of something, hungry for something, bereaved of someone, and marginalized in one form or another – Jesus speaks to us too.

I learned in my readings this week that in Aramaic the word blessed - ashre - has the root meaning to "get up and go" and to "move forward", so that the poor, the hungry the bereaved, and the marginalized that are referred to in the Sermon on the Plains are given a blessing of encouragement to be people of action. Regardless of our place in society, we too are blessed by Christ's ashre to advocate for ourselves but most importantly for the benefit of others.

Jesus had dreams and visions of eternal comfort despite the distress of the times. We are invited into that holy dream of Christ's healing and into his comfortable outstretched arms. In the manner of Christ, we are asked to bless, not to hate; to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who abuse us. Do to others as you would have done to you. What prophetic and wise words on this feast of All Saints living and past, and on the advent of Election Tuesday! Let us pray and take action then for our personal needs and for our nation, now and in the kingdom come. Amen.