Matthew 5:1-12; Revelation 7:9-17; 1 John 3:1-3 **Rev. Pauline Farrington**
November 1, 2026, All Saints Day **Trinity, North Bethesda**

Texts of the day appear at the bottom of the document.

We live in a world that is
increasingly turning to fear
as a tool for gaining and holding
power.
Fear, mistrust, division,
suspicion, conspiracy theories,
demonization, and hateful actions.
This close to election day,
we're bombarded by
fear mongering adds and rhetoric
from all sides.
And I'll tell you,
I *am* afraid.
I'm afraid for the election process,
especially in places
where the races are hotly contested.
I'm afraid for the safety of our citizens
who will go to the polls.
I'm even more afraid that
so many won't go at all because of fear.
I'm afraid of what will happen afterward,
regardless of the results.

And the reason I'm afraid
is because there is so little
love language filling the air.
There's so little about being neighborly,
or even civil in some cases.
We're being inundated with the message
that it's ok to criticize, insult,
and demean other people —
on personal levels —
creating enmity
where enmity doesn't exist.
It's frightening.

And it's heartbreaking
that these voices are *so loud*,
and the voice of love
seems to be unheard.
I don't hear any messages that promote
loving your God
and loving your neighbor.

All this is why, I believe,
these All Saints Sunday texts
couldn't be coming to us at a better time.

Imagine for yourself
the vision in Revelation,
all those saints
gathered around the throne of the Lamb.
A multitude of people from every nation,
all tribes, all peoples, every language,
and those descriptions must, necessarily, include
all religions, sexualities, cultures, and ethnicities.
All their glorious diversity is recognizable;
they're not homogenized
into one static,
uniform nature.
Yet they are all equal in their white robes.
There's no separation of factions
of color or party or socio-economic status.
Everyone belongs!
And *this* crowd
is too enormous to count.
In fact, it's not our *place* to count the numbers.
It's simply our place
to belong,
to be loved,
and to love.
Love is the draw for all these people.
They are gathered around the
throne of Love,
finding humanity's salvation
in the Love

that flows from God.

I know I talk about love a lot,
But I honestly can't imagine
a more important and urgent
thing for us to talk about.
And that especially includes love even
for those with whom we disagree.
Even for those we find difficult to love.
Sometimes people say to me
that they can't see how they can love
this person
or *that* person.
And I'm not about to tell you it's easy.
But I'm encouraged today
by these texts that remind me
to go back to the source —
the Love that is at the center
of us all.

I'm taken by the 1 John reading,
especially as I read the verses around it.
One of three main points of this book
is that loving God,
truly loving God,
naturally extends to loving each other.
The writer tells us in two different places
that God is Love.
And that we can't truly love God
and fail to love one another.
In fact, when we hate another person
(or fail to love that one)
we're still living in darkness.
We haven't yet come into the light of God's love.

Maybe rather than trying to cultivate love
for someone we find hard to love,
we might cultivate our love for God.
We might inch closer to that throne of Love.

Love isn't a duty we perform
to prove our love for God.
Love is a gift and privilege
that brings us delight in God
and delight in each other —
even when it's difficult.

Jesus shows us the love of God in the flesh —
his own flesh.
It's a love that flows from the cross
even to the people who put him there,
even to his friends who abandoned
and betrayed him,
even to *us* who deny him
every time we turn away
from a neighbor who needs us
to love them.
This is the way God loves —
this God of love
who would rather die than judge,
would rather die than
condemn or exclude any one of us.

In his sermon on the mountain,
Jesus gives us a vision of what *can be* —
of a future that is blessed when
the ones who are forgotten,
silenced, and downtrodden
are the ones who receive blessing —
He describes a new world
of God's rule of love.
He makes it come alive to us, even now,
in this nation that is about as divided,
mistrusting, blame-casting,
and hate filled as it has ever been.
Beloved, we are God's children now.
All of us.
Every single one of us,
on all sides
of every political debate.

We are all God's children, *now*.

Of course, what we *will be*
hasn't yet been revealed.
But we do know this,
when Christ is revealed to us,
in us,
we will all be like Christ.
Our eyes will be opened to that Love
that is relentless, ever flowing, universal —
to friends and foes alike.

What we will be hasn't yet been revealed.
We don't know what's coming next.
But we can be ok with that.
Because as we draw closer
to that Love that is irresistible,
we'll be drawn closer together,
less divided,
more loving toward each other,
more gracious.
We'll be more blessed.
This is what it's like
to have trust
in a loving God.

Dear friends, I will never tell you how you should vote.
And I'll never judge you based on it.
But I ask you, please,
don't be manipulated by fear,
let love motivate and guide your decisions
both for voting
and in the aftermath.

After all, Love is the most powerful force for change in the world.[1]

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[1] qtd. Rev. Becca Stevens, founder of Thistle Farms, Nashville, TN.

Today's texts:

Revelation 7:9-17

9 After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all
tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white,
with palm branches in their hands. 10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying,
"Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb!"
11 And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and
they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 singing,
"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor
and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."
13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they
come from?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are they
who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the
blood of the Lamb.
15 For this reason they are before the throne of God
and worship him day and night within his temple,
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
16 They will hunger no more and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike them,
nor any scorching heat,
17 for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

1 John 3:1-3

1 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we
are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 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. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify
themselves, just as he is pure.

Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to
him. 2 And he began to speak and taught them, saying:
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of
heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you
falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way
they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”