

All Saints, November 1, 2020

Revelation 7:9-17, Psalm 34:1-10, 22, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

As we get to know each other better, I will tell you a secret about me and my preaching to you. After nearly 30 years of giving weekly sermons, I still get very nervous and anxious about every single one of them.

That's even more true this morning as I preach days away from a General election that truly frightens me. I am scared of this election whichever way it comes out. We are guaranteed that one side or the other will rejoice and be exceedingly glad their candidate, or party, or "side" won. To whichever side "wins", I hope they pay great attention to the readings we're about to hear because they contain an incredible blueprint for the way things should be.

No, my fear and anxiety is about those who "lose". Those who "lose" could go one of two ways ending in either despair for the future, or in violence fighting to destroy the winners. Whichever way this vital election goes, I hope both sides truly listen to those readings we are given for the solemnity of All Saints-the Feast which celebrates all people living and deceased knit together in one communion and fellowship, joining Heaven and Earth together into something far bigger and greater than what we can either see or even imagine.

In our 1st reading we get a glimpse of "a great multitude that no one can count from every nation and every language" taking part together in a massive liturgy worshipping God. Not only are all the diverse people of humanity, standing together, they are joined in this ritual Liturgy by all the Angels, and elders, and even animals. It's the most beautiful vision of all creation, unified before the throne of God. No more suffering, no more hunger, no more crying or hurting, just total unity with God at the center, sheltering them all.

You'll notice for sure that it describes this unified humanity as having gone through a "great ordeal". In other words, they've all gone through the wringer. They are us, the tired, the poor, the huddled masses who yearned to breathe free, the refuse of teeming shores, the homeless, and the tempest tossed.

They are all the children of God who now realize they are God's children exactly like God, reflections of God in all their diversity, finally unified and knit together into one body in a heavenly banquet, the divine liturgy. We will not fight each other anymore because we will finally recognize God in each other and we will finally love ourselves enough to recognize that we finally know and love ourselves all as children of God.

But you're also going to notice in these readings that the center of this great circle of unified humanity is a vision of God nothing like we expected.

The object of this enormous liturgy is not God looking anything like the all-powerful frightening God of wrath and terrible judgment. No, the center of that fantastic vision is a lamb. And not just lamb, but a lamb slaughtered. A lamb slaughtered by all the people standing around him in unity, a violent humanity who put God through a hideous ordeal of crucifixion. A lamb

slaughtered by us, a unified humanity who have been forgiven and are still loved unconditionally by God.

God, not a mighty warrior or even as a ferocious lion of Judah, but as a slaughtered lamb upon the throne. The lowest, not even a human but a lowly animal and even then not even an animal at the top of the food chain, but an animal at the lowest threat of any violence—a gentle lamb.

Understanding all of that will then help us understand the Sermon on the Mount that the New Moses will reveal to us the Gospel.

As nervous as I get giving sermons, here we get to hear part of a sermon given by Jesus, God among us, a sermon given by God the slaughtered lamb. A sermon to be heard and inwardly digested by all humanity across all time, not just the losers of an election, but also by whoever wins. And what does the slaughtered lamb God tell us?

First of all, let me help you translate one recurring word of his sermon: “Blessed” means “Exceedingly happy” or “graced” or even “radiantly exuberant.”

The joy and happiness don’t come from being wealthy and powerful as if that’s what we think it means to be blessed by a God. It’s not a reward system. No! The slaughtered Lamb God is going to preach about “My kind of people are not the rich, the bold winners, the safe victors, or the well-respected.

They are the outcasts, the marginalized, the women, the children, the freaks. The sinners in the hands of a loving God are the poor, the mourning, grieving who know heartbreaking sorrow and empathy. They are the little meek ones who go unrewarded and unrecognized, those who long for justice.”

The people standing around the slaughtered lamb god are merciful—who allowances for other people’s mistakes and imperfections. Radiantly and exuberantly happy people who are pure in heart, who are honest with themselves. He will preach to us about how truly happy we could be here and now, not in the future in some distant heaven but right now if we choose to listen that blessed are we when we are peacemakers creating diversity and reconciliation everywhere to everyone. Understand the Lamb’s sermon and we’ll not just be happy or blessed. We will be filled with radiant bliss. But enough of my inadequate sermon. Let’s listen to the lamb’s sermon.