

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

11/1/20 ~ St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Encinitas, CA *(live-streamed)*

All Saints (A): ~~Revelation 7:9-17~~; Psalm 34:1-10, 22; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

"Blessed are the peacemakers." That's the line of the Beatitudes that really jumps out at me these days. When I read, "Blessed are the peacemakers," there's sort of writhing within me...a groan, a deep sigh that cries out, "Oh Lord, do we ever need the peacemakers!"

Election Day is just two days away, and I can't help but worry that these next few months are going to be intense! It's such a divisive time in this country, and I my fear is that it could get worse—no matter the outcome of the election. We need peacemakers.

But we're all here—in-person or online—because we believe the life of Christ has something to say to us—to the whole world. Plus, it just so happens that this is All Saints' Day, and as Christians, we believe that those who have gone before us also have something to say. So, it's fitting that we enter Election Day from that foundation—honoring those saints that founded this church, as well as our nation's democracy.

We sometimes forget that the Episcopal Church was founded by good Anglicans who left England to be free of the King's oversight, in matters of state and religion. Those same innovative, brave individuals, who created the Episcopal Church, also formed the U.S. government. We Episcopalians have a long history of standing up for what we believe is best for the common good!

We've learned and grown a lot over the last couple of centuries, as our democracy was formed and developed. And the same is true of our faith tradition. Our governance and our Church were designed to be dynamic so that our evolving understanding of the complexities of life could be incorporated. We've definitely made mistakes along the way, but we've tried to grow from them, and tweak the systems as we better understand how to help more people.

So, I wonder...who are the peacemakers in your life? We all have them in our families, classrooms, and workplaces—those people who can, ultimately, help us find a solution that works for everyone involved, or maybe just help us see the other person's viewpoint, or, at the very least, be the calm, non-anxious presence in the midst of chaos.

In that same line about the peacemakers in the Gospel, my ears perk up at the second part of that phrase: "for they will be called children of God." When I study this morning's scripture readings a little further, I notice we're all meant to be children of God.

Although the peacemakers get an extra nod, as they faithfully answer God's call, this list of all the ways the world will experience God's blessing: in their mourning, their meekness, their hunger, along with the verses of First John, makes clear that this message isn't just for the little church community who originally heard it, or just for our Christian siblings, but for the entire world. God welcomes us all to be a part of this big, diverse, messy adopted family.

So, back to that person in our lives who brings peace to the table; often they aren't a biological family member, but someone who's considered part of the family in an adoptive or chosen way. I bet, like me, you've said: "She's not my biological sister, but she IS family. She's part of my chosen family."

Without that perspective, our view of God can be limited. Yes, God has a chosen people, but the chosen people of God comprise the whole human race. In this morning's Scripture, Jesus is expounding on the inclusivity of God. And, as I just indicated with my friend, rather than speaking of her as the "chosen one"—as if there would only be one person who could achieve this status in my heart—I spoke of her as being chosen family.

We are all chosen by God. None of us—nor anyone else out there in the world—is the "chosen one"; God's expansiveness goes so far beyond just one individual, one nation or one race. We are all adopted children of God. Meaning God doesn't have to love us with the obligation of biological ties, rather God chooses us...all of us!

We are called to be Christ-like in all circumstances, and that can seem like a big order, and, yet, it can be fairly simple. Being Christ-like simply means to be completely rooted in God; to dwell in God; to never forget that we are God's chosen family, so that we, too, can be among the peacekeepers.

So, here's how to tap into that calm, non-anxious presence: take some deep breaths right now—full, gentle belly breaths; maybe count to four on your inhale and to six on your exhale. After you do that a few times, notice the subtle difference in what you feel in your body. Remind yourself that, in that spaciousness, God is present, and commit deep breathing whenever you start to feel anxious or frustrated.

Who knows? You might get someone to meet you in the middle about something, or maybe you'll create the space to better understand where they're coming from. At the very least, you'll shift the energy around you as you show up as a calm, non-anxious peacekeeper. That's what it means to be Christ-like. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

-AMEN

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Revelation 7:9-17

⁹After 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. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And 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, ¹²singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that 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. ¹⁵For 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. ¹⁶They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; ¹⁷for 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.”

Psalm 34:1-10, 22

¹I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
²My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad.
³O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.
⁴I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
⁵Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.
⁶This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord, and was saved from every trouble.
⁷The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.
⁸O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.
⁹O fear the Lord, you his holy ones, for those who fear him have no want.
¹⁰The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.
²²The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

1 John 3:1-3 (replaced by the "Living Epistle")

³See 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. ²Beloved, 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. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Matthew 5:1-12

⁵When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then 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 righteousness’ sake, 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. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.