

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
955 Main St.
Barboursville, West Virginia 25504
Worship for November 1, 2020
All Saints Sunday

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1

Prelude

Call to Worship

Holy God of wind and fire,

dance through our worship today.

Holy God of earthquakes and illness,

share our memories, our tears of sadness and loss.

Holy God of creation and new beginnings,

show us again your vision of healing and wholeness

and the promise of life here and in the world to come.

Opening Prayer

Eternal God, you have knit together your people of all times and places into one communion in the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us your Holy Spirit that we may be encouraged and strengthened, persevering in our part of faith's course, until such time as we join the great cloud of witnesses in our eternal home. Amen.

New Testament Readings

Revelation 21:1-6; Matthew 5:1-12

The Morning Message

From *Presbyterian Outlook*, Rev. Jill Duffield, Editor

Ed and I took our daughter and grandson for a ride on the Durbin Rocket, a steam-powered train, a few days ago. We got there via Elkins. On our way to and from Durbin, we drove through the Tygart Valley, a beautiful, expansive valley dotted with farms and houses and very few businesses. We noticed a number of churches

of all sorts of Christian persuasions. But when we came upon the Tygarts Valley Presbyterian Church, we were so struck by its beauty that we stopped, backed up and just took it in. In fact there are at least four Presbyterian churches along that drive, all of them testifying to faith in Jesus Christ across the centuries.

At home, I started doing some research on that church in particular and found a rich history. The church has been in existence since before the Revolutionary War. A lot of history has taken place between that era and this, and I wondered how we 21st century Christians might measure up to our hardy forebears. What would they think of how our churches live out the call of Christ, what our response has been to a devastating pandemic, why we are emoting with such ardor over the election to come next Tuesday?

I ran across an article in the current issue of *Presbyterian Outlook* that spoke to me in this moment. I offer it to you in the spirit of our ancestors, who labored in extraordinary circumstances to settle this land we call “almost heaven.” May they find us faithful.

All tribes, every nation, together in worship.

How lovely. God has such love for us that we are called children of God. How beautiful. When God appears we will be like God because we will see God for who God is. How utterly astounding and good. Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the peacemakers, those persecuted for righteousness. How hopeful and powerful. The texts for this Sunday, this All Saints’ Day, resound with glory and grace, unity and belonging, blessing times blessing times blessing. The contrast of such language cannot be denied when laid alongside the bombardment of political ads and fearmongering and social media yelling coming at us mere days before the election.

A picture of every tribe and nation united in worship seems naïve if not laughable. Envisioning each other as God’s children feels all but impossible when the message of our culture is one of winning and losing, for us or against us, completely right or completely wrong. Even Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount riff with blessings comes across as more fantasy than the living, true word of God. What do we do with such a stark rift between the signal of the Bible and the noise of our world? Can we really look like the God we profess to follow when we are so shaped by our professed secular tribes?

I listened to the podcast “Crackers and Grape Juice” recently with Douglas Harink as the guest. Harink he discussed his book, “Resurrecting Justice: Reading Romans for the Life of the World.” Harink, a Canadian commenting on the American

political landscape said: “Both sides are thinking that somehow or another getting this or that party elected is good for Christians. I think my point of view is neither side is good for Christians. Because effectively they have become idolatrous powers that Christians are looking to for salvation.” He went on to say that he in no way believes Christians should not engage in politics and that there is an important role for such engagement. However, again and again, he emphasized that Christians look only to Jesus Christ for salvation and that justice is accomplished by God through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Our focus, our ultimate hope, ought to be the same as that of every tribe and nation in Revelation: Jesus Christ.

I appreciated the conversation and it caused me to examine my own anxiety and hopes around this year’s election. Unquestionably, much is at stake and I believe it is incumbent upon people of faith to participate and vote. But regardless of outcome, Jesus will continue to be Lord of all, the Lamb on the throne of heaven, the Word made flesh, Emmanuel and God Incarnate. We do not need to forget or discount this irrevocable truth. Further, we will still be called the children of God and Jesus’ blessings of the meek and the mourning and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will not be rescinded nor prevented.

All Saints’ Day this year provides me with a sure and certain hope that is embodied not solely in Jesus Christ, but made tangible in the people of faith who have gone through many ordeals and remained steadfast in their loyalty to Christ and their love for neighbor and world. I do not want to tether my hopes too tightly to any earthly power because to do so is to diminish the providence and omnipotence of the Triune God who has no equal.

This Sunday, this All Saints’ Day just days before our presidential election in the year of a global pandemic, I need to worship the Lamb who died that we might live, the Messiah who ate with sinners and told us to love the unlovable and the unlovely in order that the world would know that we are his followers. I need to remember the great cloud of witnesses and the members of every tribe and nation over the vast expanse of time who refused to succumb to the lesser (but so appealing) gods of vengeance, hate and cynicism. When I picture that glorious heavenly worship, I see some of the saints who entered the Church Triumphant this year. Saints like John Lewis who said at Montreat in 2015, “Never, ever let someone pull you down so low you hate them.” The saint who said to all of us in words published in the New York Times the day of his funeral: “Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.”

When I think this All Saints' Sunday about the children of God who resemble the One they follow, I think about an elder in a church I served who worked tirelessly for equity in education, who when he could no longer speak, used a letter board and his pointer finger to slowly spell out "I love you" at the end of what would turn out to be my last visit with him. I think of so many who have endured so much and yet kept the faith, living the faith, focused on the saving power of Jesus Christ. I think of them and know they would tell me they were blessed through it all because they served a loving God who kept them from sinking so low that they hated another but instead had a good hope for all.

I do not know what we will wake up to on Wednesday morning — or any morning for that matter. I do know, though, the Lamb sits on the throne in heaven, Jesus came to save sinners, Christ will come again and nothing will be lost to the One who came to save the world. This beautiful, glorious truth enables me to worship this Sunday and tomorrow and the next day, even as I seek to do God's will, however poorly, but surely with the promise that I, that you, that we, are so beloved we are called children of God and so we are.

Solo

Pie Jesu

Gabriel Faure (1895-1924)

Pious Jesus, give them rest

Madeline Blake - soprano

Affirmation of Faith
God, PCUSA 1985

From *A Declaration of Faith*, Chapter 10, Hope in

In the death of Jesus Christ, God's way in the world seemed finally defeated. But death was no match for God. The resurrection of Jesus was God's victory over death. Death often seems to prove that life is not worth living, that our best efforts and deepest affections go for nothing. We do not yet see the end of death. But Christ has been raised from the dead, transformed and yet the same person. In his resurrection is the promise of ours. We are convinced the life God wills for us is stronger than the death that destroys us. The glory of that life exceeds our imagination but we know we shall be with Christ. So we treat death as a broken power. Its ultimate defeat is certain. In the face of death we grieve. Yet in hope we celebrate life. No life ends so tragically that its meaning and value are destroyed. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayers of the Faithful and the Lord's Prayer

*This morning we remember family, friends, and loved ones who have joined
the blessed company of the saints in light during this church year.*

John Minichan, Betty Nikolaus, Jane Brown, Laura Fry

When we were baptized into Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death.
We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that, as Christ was
raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life.
For if we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we will certainly be
united with him in a resurrection like his.

Romans 6:3-5

Eternal God, we bless you for the great company of all those who have kept the
faith, finished their race, and now rest from their labor. We praise you for those
dear to us:

John, Betty, Jane, and Laura

and for those we name now in our hearts whom you have received into your
presence.

Help us to believe where we have not seen, trusting you to lead us through our
years.

Bring us at last with all your saints into the joy of your home, through Christ Jesus
who taught us to pray, saying, Our Father...Amen.

Hymn

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

Text: L. Scott, 1929; Music: John Henry Hopkins, 1940

I sing a song of the saints of God, faithful and brave and true,
who toiled and fought and lived and died for the Lord they loved and knew.
And one was a doctor and one was a queen and one was a shepherdess on the
green.

They were all of them saints of God and I mean, God helping, to be one, too.

They loved their Lord so dear, so dear, and God's love made them strong.
And they followed the right for Jesus' sake the whole of their good lives long.

And one was a soldier and one was a priest, and one was slain by a fierce, wild
beast.

And there's not any reason, no, not the least, why I shouldn't be one, too.

They lived not only in ages past, there are hundreds and thousands still.

The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will.

You can meet them in school, or in lanes or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in
shops, or at tea;

for the saints of God are just folks like me, and I mean to be one, too.

Blessing

Go out in confidence that your lives are safe in God.

Keep your hands clean and your hearts pure.

Do not act falsely or deceitfully.

Trust in the Lord, even in the face of death,
and follow in the footsteps of all God's saints.

And may God keep a protective eye on you;

May Christ Jesus show you his grace and mercy;

And may the Holy Spirit give you a vision of the life of the world made new.

Postlude

Announcement

Work is nearing completion on the heating and air conditioning project. The
congregation will be notified as soon as possible of a date when we will gather
again for worship in the sanctuary.