

**November 4, 2018 All Saints Day**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Isaiah 25:6-9, Singapore (M. Oliver),**  
**Revelations 21:1-6a, John 11:32-44**

[Parker Palmer quotes are from a reprint from Weavings, March/April 2009, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, copyright 2008 by Upper Room Ministries. List of those who died from CNN.]

**Grace and peace to you, Beloved Saints of God. Amen.**

**I am grateful to worship with you today.**

On All Saints Sunday we name aloud those who have died this year, tolling the bell, lighting the candles.

...And when the light is already bright, we light still more flames,

conjuring the names, the faithfulness, the struggle,

the living and dying of so many others who have gone before us.

On the rail around our communion table are the names of those members of Hope who joined the saints eternal this year: Lorraine, and Dick, Millie, Tim, Verle and Margaret.

In Holy Communion we join them in this rich feast, this promised foretaste of the feast to come.

**But All Saints doesn't stop there.**

When we're tempted to hide our teary eyes and turn inward into ourselves,

our God invites us instead to look into the shining faces of the saints around us,

to squeeze a hand, to hug, to hold,

to be living saints with and for one another.

Around the sanctuary this morning, you see these screen prints done years back by Hope's Phil Thompson, an artist, a teacher, one of our living saints.

This morning in our readings we heard a Mary Oliver piece.

While some traditions elevate just a few as saints,

in our practice there's an equality that, at its purest, crosses all the lines.

In the beauty and the gritty-ness,

we are called, as Mary Oliver writes, to see "the light that can shine out of a life,"

and, I'd add, dear saints, to trust this light shining out of our lives.

Our time together is fleeting, let us savor these precious days while we have each other.

**Mary and Martha and Lazarus**, in our Gospel this morning, they know this.

Can you feel the grief in their home?

"If only you'd been here," Mary starts, and really she's beginning to name her grief, their grief...

...the numbing pain, the desire to deny it—make it all just go way,

the deep sadness, for some the relief, the anger,

the memories...that come flooding back in a sound or a smell.

Their whole community, the Jewish community has gathered in support—we know how this works.

Jesus weeps, his own grief at the surface, his own compassion, not hidden, but real, raw.

**Parker Palmer writes about heartbreak, Martha and Mary's heartbreak, our heartbreak.**

He reminds us that there are different ways our hearts break.

One way shatters our hearts; he says, "The heart can be broken into a thousand shards,  
sharp-edged fragments that sometimes become shrapnel ..."

But there is another way: "Imagine," he writes, "that small, clenched fist of a heart 'broken open' into largeness of life, into greater capacity to hold one's own and the world's pain and joy."

**Like Jesus, I pray that we can hold space for this very real heartbreak.**

Sometimes it will come as shards, that's true.

But often, with space, with time, our heartbreak can break us open into something more.

That's what happens for Jesus: so much heartbreak, so much need, a political system bent against justice, institutions clinging to their power, and Jesus is broken open to love fiercely,

Sound familiar? Jesus breaks us open for this very same fierce love.

**50 some years ago** some of Hope's then-living saints, Verle Rhoades, Bertha Hanson, and another woman, began a visitation ministry.

They'd recruit and train volunteers who would visit our members who find it difficult to get to church.

They'd be those visitors who come every month or two, who bring flowers at Easter,  
who invite the stories and take the time to sit and listen as the stories unfold.

Today we lift up this Friendly Visitors ministry, those saints who began it, but also those living saints, many of you, who keep visiting.

This morning at the kids' table the children are making cards that will be given to our homebound members.

If you'd like to learn more about Friendly Visitors or join in, talk with them after worship near the lounge.

**Last Saturday as news emerged** of the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue,

I felt like we'd gone over the edge.

Already there was so much heartbreak,

already the politics were hate-filled,

already the stakes seemed so high.

This week I've been watching the responses, and I've been watching my own response.

This heartbreak could shatter us, send shrapnel spewing this way and that.

In some ways the white nationalism and hatred that fuels a shooting like this is born from a shattered heart.

The heartbreak, though, could also bring us together.

How many services have been held, how many vigils, how many statements.

Together we've remembered: Irving, Melvin, 97 year old Rose, Bernice and Sylvan, Jerry, Joyce, Richard, Daniel, the brothers Cecil and David.

In our heartbreak we name these elders killed at the synagogue, but at once we must also remember those killed at Mother Emanuel AME, at the Pulse night club, at the Kroger grocery store, in hatred in so many other spaces that had once felt safe, even sacred.

I hold these shootings together, for this isn't *just* about Anti-Semitism.

The other violence isn't just about hatred toward those with brown or black skin.

It's not simply about Islamophobia, or disdain of the queer community.

This violence, this hatred is linked, intertwined.

It sure feels good to come together, I'll be honest, but these times call us to go even further.

**At its most effective, heartbreak breaks us open—**you and me, our communities, our national conversation.

We can't cover up what is happening and its deep roots, this heartbreak opens us to hold the pain.

"Lazarus, come out," Jesus calls. It is nothing short of resurrection that we need.

...And heartbreak can do this, it can open us to new life, deeper life.

Dearly beloved, these times, this edge upon which we teeter, beg our heartbreak, our compassion, our tears, our fierce love.

Today, we bring the memories of our blessed saints and the trust that together, with the saints at rest and all the saints around us, we can use our heartbreak for something necessary, something needed, something sacred.

**I invite you to enter into this holy time of remembering our saints.**