

Sermon for November 5, 2017 – Year A, Feast of All Saints

St. John's, West Hartford

Sermon by Erin Flinn, North Central Region Missionary, Episcopal Church in CT

Good morning.

My name is Erin Flinn and I am your North Central Region Missionary

Thank you for welcoming me and for permitting me to speak with you today.

Let us pray,

Open our ears, O Lord,

to hear your word and know your voice.

Speak to our hearts and strengthen our wills,

that we may serve you today and always. Amen

When I first opened to today's readings

And saw that there was a passages from the Book of Revelations

I thought to myself, uh oh

Because before I even took a moment to read the passage itself

My mind started firing off all the frightful images that are associated with this Book.

Immediately, my imagination took flight and began conjuring up all the scary bits

Associated with John's great vision.

I saw images of the great red dragon with seven heads and thorns

I saw horses of different colors riding through the night

And I saw large apocalyptic storms and loud trumpets blasting.

All the wild imagery that Hollywood would have us focus on.
But when Hollywood borrows from Revelations for their apocalyptic thrillers
As they often do,
They miss the point of the story almost entirely
Because they focus on the pain and darkness
And leave out the hope and light
Yes, the author of this vision does present us with some frightful scenes
But ultimately, he is not wanting to scare us,
Rather I believe that he is trying to show us that amongst the pain and suffering
Caused by power and greed and war
There is indeed still hope.
And this hope is found in John's breathe taking vision of God's Glorious Kingdom.

Just listen to today's beautiful passage, written our brave visionary -

"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.
[Crying out] in a loud voice, saying
'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne,
And to the Lamb!'"

Can you see it in your mind?

A great multitude of saints from every part of God's creation

Standing together as one to worship the lamb.

Not fighting or jockeying for power,

But simply being.

My friends, this is what hope looks like.

Hope looks like a time when all of creation is restored to each other

And to God.

It's a vision that may seem like impossible fantasy but it isn't

Yes, in our humanness we tend to concern ourselves with

Division, categorization, and boundaries

that we might have some sense of control over any given situation

But what we learn from our reading today is that

God just doesn't work that way

The people in John's vision

Are not divided by nation or tribe or language

They are not lumped into categories

John does not say that he saw Jews to his right and Gentiles to his left

Romans to his right, and Greeks to his left

Rather he writes that the people simply came forth before God

in a multitude that cannot be counted

United in their difference BY their love FOR God and THE love OF God.

This is OUR hope

AND it IS the Mission of God

For it is the Mission of God to heal and restore creation
not only to Godself but to each other.

That is the Mission of God

and therefore it must also be the Mission of the Church,

Not to act as a source of division but rather a source of open embrace
that seeks not UNIFORMITY, but unity and peace
with all the saints of God, known and unknown.

Now it is easy to get tangled up in the notion that Revelations

Is only about the end times, that which will happen after this world passes away,

But I wonder, if we allow it, can this book speak to us today?

Can this passages be a guiding vision

for our work in the neighborhoods around us?

I for one think it can, because it gives us a vision of that which can be

And ultimately will be.

A healed in whole creation.

The bigger question, however, is not whether we can hold this vision

But what will we do to make this vision a reality?

As your Region Missionary

It is my belief that God is calling us to work together as a Region

Across our 36 parishes, from Massachusetts to Killingworth

Connecticut River to the Farmington River Valley

To bring about healing and wholeness here in Connecticut

To do this we will have to find a way to communicate and collaborate

To share ideas and stories.

I am grateful to those of you who were part of the forum earlier today

I thank you for sharing your vision and your stories

Of how God is calling you to be in the world.

This is a wonderful start, but is only a beginning

I encourage you to continue to dream God's dream together

And to invite others to dream and build the dream with you.

It won't always be easy, and at times it may even be messy

But we have to try

And we begin by recalling that even in our differences we are united

By our love FOR God and THE love OF God

Remembering that we are all saints in God's kingdom

That was, and is, and is to come.

I invite you to join me for a forum after church

During which time I will give a little background on the North Central Region,

What it is, how it came about and why it exists.

I will also tell you a bit about my role as a Region Missionary

and why I said 'yes' to this incredible call.

Above all, I hope that our time together will be an opportunity

For you to share your vision for the church

And your stories of how you have lived and are hoping to live into

God's call to work as a community to

Heal and restore God's creation

In your parish, your neighborhood and beyond.