



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost, All Saints Day, November 1, 2020

These Are They...

by Garland F. Pierce

Revelation 7:9-17

7:9 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.

7:10 They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

7:11 And 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,

7:12 singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

7:13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?"

7:14 I 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.

7:15 For 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.

7:16 They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;

7:17 for 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."

This first Sunday in November falls on November 1st, the day that many churches recognize as All Saints Day. It is an observance that may not be particularly common in some AME congregations; but, it has its place and purpose in the life of the Church. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, regarded it as holy day that he loved. We as Methodists do not officially venerate saints; but, we do acknowledge and give thanks to God for those who have come before us in the faith and who have passed down to us the faith. Particularly, people of Africa and of African descent traditionally have honored ancestors. All Saints Day is an opportunity to give thanks for and honor to our spiritual ancestors and faith heroes and sheroes who are now a part of that great cloud of witnesses and the church triumphant.

John's vision in Revelation reminds us that we are a part of a long continuum of believers—those who have come before as well as those who shall follow. That long unbroken chain makes up that number that no one can possibly count. The great multitude will ultimately be gathered and fully reconciled to give unending praise to God. John's vision reminds us that those who came before us lived lives that were acquainted with grief and suffering, sometimes because of their faithful witness. In these times of pandemic death and division, we are reminded that there is a long history of the oppressed having to live in spite of and fight against structures and powers whose only interests in them had to do with how their labor, their bodies, and their suffering made the empire and its rulers great (perhaps again). From our ancestors, we gain lessons of faithful witness and faithful fighting that strengthen and inform our own struggles today. May we live lives so that others yet unborn likewise may find faithful examples by which to live their own lives. Finally, John's vision reminds us that the life of faith begins and ends and begins again eternally in the presence and love of God through Jesus, the perfect Lamb and Great Shepherd, "for 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."

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Who are your spiritual ancestors? How have they influenced your faith?

PRAY this hymn:

In Times of Great Decision

AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D ("The Church's One Foundation")

In times of great decision, be with us, God, we pray!
Give each of us a vision of Jesus' loving way.
When louder words seem endless and other voices sure,
Remind us of your promise: your love and truth endure.

O God, whose gifts are countless, you send us bearing peace.
You fill our dreams with justice for all communities.
You give us global neighbors, that all may justly live.
May those we choose as leaders reflect the life you give.

O God, you bridged the distance; you opened wide your door.
You call us by our presence to reach to serve the poor.
You teach us: Welcome strangers! Seek justice on the earth!
May those we choose as leaders see every person's worth.

You call on every nation to put aside all greed,
To care for your creation and for your ones in need,
To care for those in prison, for children, for the ill.
In times of great decision, may we choose leaders well. AMEN

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, if any of your spiritual mentors are still alive, reach out to them with a word of thanks. In honor of those ancestors who are gone, what can you do to honor who they were to you? (Write/say a prayer of thanksgiving for their lives, make a donation in their honor, share the stories of their lives with someone who has not heard it but could benefit from hearing it.) For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic process (voter registration (where still alive), voting and encouraging others to do so, help to facilitate and monitor for a fair election—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org>.) For everyone, advocate and be a witness to others by practicing social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Song:

For All the Saints
AMEC Hymnal, #476

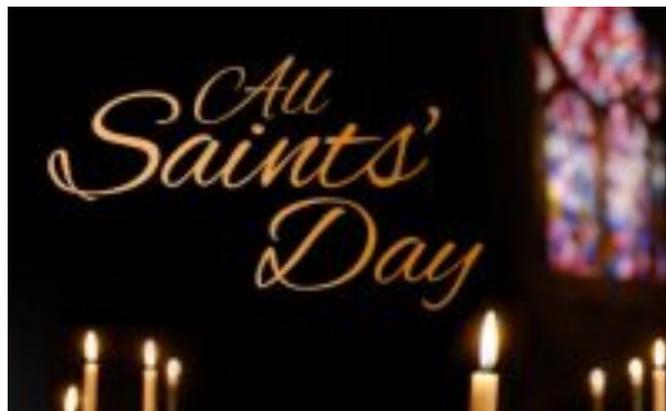
1. For all the saints, who from their la-bors rest,
Who Thee by faith be-fore the world con-fessed,
Thy name, O Je-sus, be for-ev-er blest,
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!
2. Thou wast their rock, their for-tress and their might;

Thou, Lord, their cap-tain in the well-fought fight;
Thou, in the dark-ness drear, their one true light.
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!

3. O may Thy sol-diers, faith-ful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who no-bly fought of old,
And win with them the vic-tor's crown of gold.
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!
4. O blest com-mu-nion, fel-low-ship di-vine!
We fee-bly strug-gle, they in glo-ry shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!
5. And when the strife is fierce, the war-fare long,
Steals on the ear the dis-tant tri-umph song,
And hearts are brave a-gain, and arms are strong.
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!
6. From earth's wide bounds, from o-cean's far-thest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the count-less host,
Sing-ing to Fa-ther, Son, and Ho-ly Ghost,
Al-le-lu-ia, Al-le-lu-ia!

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.