

St. Alban's Annandale, VA
All Saints Transferred, November 4, 2018
Year B: Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in, it
the world and all who dwell therein.
For it is the Lord who founded it upon the seas
and made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.

Though we typically think of the anticipation of Christmas
--the Incarnation of Jesus--
beginning with Advent in December,
the church's turn towards the Coming of Christ
Really begins at All Saints as we are invited to contemplate
how we with all who ever have lived and all who ever will live
are caught up in God's glorious creation
and belong to God in one grand communion whose faces
In the fullness of time
Will all be turned toward God.

Our readings this week and in the weeks to come
give us multiple images of the world, creation, and the new creation in Jesus Christ
And multiple images of who God is and calls us to be.

Psalm 24, and the reading from Wisdom of Solomon which are in dialog with each
other,
are a synopsis of many of the themes we will be hearing over the next few weeks
and they are both deeply meaningful texts for today when we observe All Saints
day:

These passages proclaim a truth
That we as Christians find peace in:
Everything comes from God,
belongs to God, is done in God,
and returns to God.
“The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God”
And God will enter gloriously into the midst of the people.

Amid the chaos, violence, and anxieties of life,
These words are comfort and assurance.
Comfort and assurance is also the nature of the two
Feasts we celebrate this morning and evening.

I have to admit that for me All Saints Day and
All Souls Day are tightly bound up together.
My home church is the Cathedral of All Souls
and naturally then as the church’s feast day
All Souls has colored my experience of the day, and I rather like it that way.

The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,
The world and all who dwell there in:
It’s all the saints and all the souls and
you and me all striving to be righteous
and to be held in the hand of God.
It’s the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Alban,
St. John, and St. Mary Magdalene
Right there with mom, granddaddy, and beloved friends who have died

All together held by God
So I invite you to bring to mind
Those whom you see held by God

In our few minutes together this morning
Walter Brueggemann classifies this as a psalm of orientation,
In it we are anchored in the knowledge
And safety of God
Because as Brueggemann says,
"God is known to be trustworthy and reliable"
(The Message of the Psalms [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984] 25)

God is known to be trustworthy and reliable
And that is where our trust is to be placed
And anything else is idolatry

Idolatry sounds like Golden Calves and Baals,
Worshipping statues and sticks in the wilderness
But we have our own idols, individually and collectively
Idols of ideologies: political, social, racial
Idols of anxiety and loss
Idols of I am in control and I can take care of this situation

We think these idols or hurts or losses are ours to carry
Then we remember
The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
The world and all who dwell therein

We are to recognize that it is all God's
it has always belonged to God
We are to orient ourselves to God
As Tyler Wigg-Stevenson says,
The world is not ours to save--it is ours to love and steward
Jesus' work is to save
And no matter how many idols we create,

Saving the world will never be our work.
God is trustworthy and reliable
God is our savior

Psalm 24 challenges us and our idols,
And maybe even our understandings about salvation
By saying, who can ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who can stand in God's holy place?
Those who have clean hands and a pure heart,
 who have not pledged themselves to falsehood,
 nor sworn by what is a fraud.

We must have right actions and right attitudes
To approach God's holy place
And yet, without God we cannot have clean hands and a pure heart
It sounds as if we are condemned

But God knew that this is not work we can do on our own,
We have no power to create clean hands and pure hearts
It is only by being close to God, by ascending the hill of the Lord
That we obtain what is prescribed
the thing we need is the thing we cannot do -- without doing the thing we need.

We want the blessing of the Lord and the reward of salvation
We want to see God's face
And we cry out "lift up your heads, O gates!
Lift them high!
Jesus Christ is the gate
Jesus Christ opened the way to the Holy Hill of God
We lift our heads to him
We follow him to the holy hill

And those who seek God
All of us, together, in community,
All the saints and all the souls who came before us
and those who will come after us
We all seek God's face
And we pray,
that in seeking God we may find God
And be found by God

Let us look around
The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it
The world and all who dwell therein
God is visible to us in this world
In the Fall leaves and breezes
In a baby's smile and the laughter of a loved one

We inhabit God's world
And the holy hill where we seek seek God is prayer, sacrament,
And communion with one another and the world around us
If we seek God -- we are likely to find God
What we focus on we get more of
If we shift our attention to watching for signs of God
What might we find?

To live in the world
is to affirm that most basic reality that God reigns.
That everything is God's and comes from God and returns to God
We affirm this amid death, amid shootings,
amid political dissent and disunity,
we affirm this in birth, hope, peace, and loving relationships

We can deceive ourselves into believing
That we are in control of our lives
with our planners, our economic outlooks,
Our cupboards full of food, our guns, our ideologies
But let's step back and ground ourselves in this:
the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and all who dwell therein.
Amen.