

## Love Shall Overcome

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Community Presbyterian Church - Rochester, Minnesota

All Saints Sunday - November 6, 2022

Texts: Luke 6:20-31, Ephesians 1:15-23

RESPONSIVE READING Luke 6:20-31

Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the realm of God."

**We release all that we possess,  
that we may have you alone.**

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. "

**We hunger for justice,  
and trust that one day we shall be satisfied.**

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

**Knowing all shall be made well,  
we weep with all who mourn,  
especially victims of Covid, racism, war, and gun violence.**

"Blessed are you when people hate you, and exclude you."

**God grant us courage even when reviled to resist injustice,  
to stand with the marginalized, and to trust your blessing.**

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you."

**God grant us love and courage to be merciful, just as you are merciful,  
in the spirit and the company of Christ.**

SCRIPTURE READING Ephesians 1:15-23 (as interpreted by Steve Garnaas-Holmes)

Friends, I have heard of your deep trust in Jesus, the Beloved, the Anointed of God, and of your love for all the saints, so I never cease giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

I pray that God—the God Jesus Christ showed us—God our beautiful Life-Giver—may give you a spirit of mindfulness and wisdom as you deepen your openness to God, so that with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you will know the hope God has for you.

May you live in wonder and trust of the gifts we all receive as God's beloved. May you feel in your bones the immeasurable greatness of the power of love when we trust it. This is God's power in us. Love is the power that raised Christ from the dead, the power that orders the universe, the power above all human systems, every rule and authority and dominion, and above every seen or unseen power, force or value you could imagine.

God subjects everything to love, and we—we are the embodiment of that love, which conquers everything and fills everything and completes everything. We are the body, and Love is what makes us alive.

Friends, today my heart is torn.

Today, we look back on all those faithful people in our lives who taught us how to love, how to learn, how to live. We are grateful for them. We call them saints.



Today, I look ahead to an election that has already been marred by distrust, accusations, and angry, hate-filled speech. Do we call those who disagree with us enemies? Sinners?

My heart is torn. It's easy, comforting, and safe to talk about blessings we've inherited. It's scary and difficult to talk about loving enemies. How can the pieces fit together? Try.



Love is reborn in each generation. Connections are woven before we take our first breath. We are built of genes from ancestors we never met. Our animal friends shape us, too: my father's stubborn black pony, Rosie, taught him his first lesson in a nonviolent battle of wills. The Dakota people refer to every living thing as "all our relations." The land, too, is our ancestor.



And so we remember and honor those who have gone before.



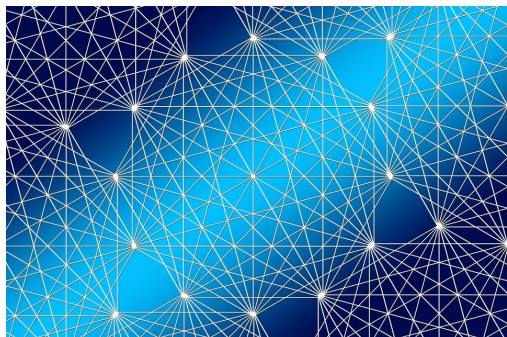
It's human, but not only human, to do this. All Saints Day in Croatia looks like a river of light. A dog sleeps on the grave of its owner during a Day of the Dead observance in Mexico. We bring our candles and our prayers into our worship. This is our hope as Christians: "Each loved one who has died has taken a piece of us

along with them into the next life. And each one has left a piece of themselves within us. Each generation builds bridges of love and trust for the next generation coming afterwards. If you have never loved, there is no bridge. . . ."<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Richard Rohr, <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/the-continuum-of-life-2022-10-30/>, paraphrased.

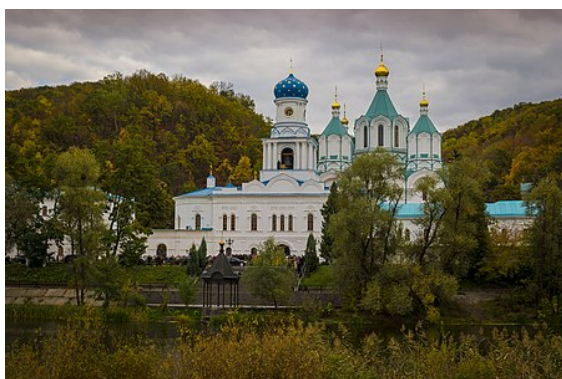


Look at the candles on the table. Each represents a “saint” to someone here.

Which of these beloved souls was perfect? Without sin? Without negative feelings? Love weaves the connections that overcome enmity. Hurt



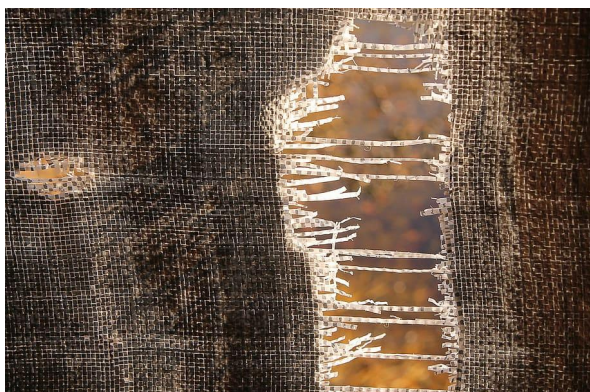
and fear shatter those connections. Jesus tells us to love our neighbors. And he tells us to love our enemies, those who hate and hurt us. How do we know the difference?



When we feel hurt or threatened, it's natural to get angry. Anger, like every emotion, is a gift from God. Anger lets us know when boundaries have been violated. But when anger consumes us, the fabric of life is

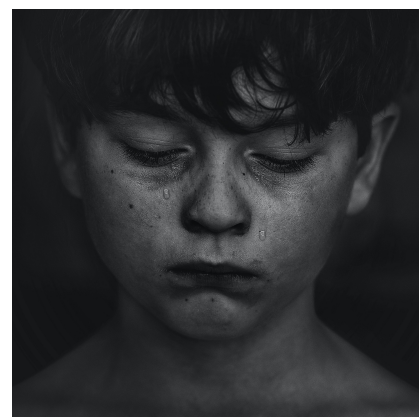


torn. This beloved monastery in Ukraine stood for 500 years. See it now. Things fall apart. And they are torn apart when anger and fear, distrust and accusations rule in our hearts. When each side is convinced the other side is an enemy who will destroy us, we invite Mutually Assured Destruction. MAD. In the 1960s, that was about nuclear weapons. What angers, threatens and tears us apart now?



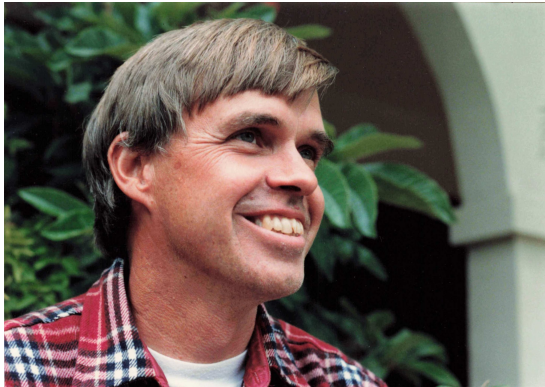
There are tears.

And there are tears.



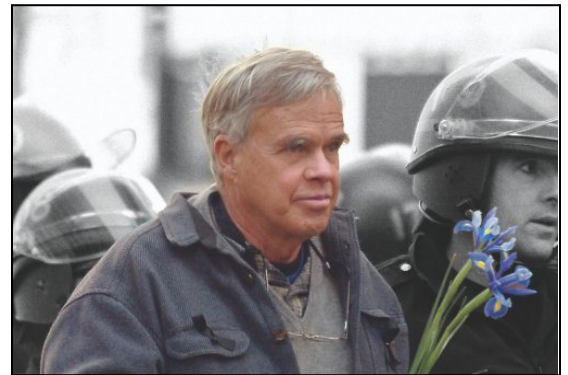


But we are *all* victims, caught in the same spiral of violence, trapped by the same systems. All of us have some saint and some sinner within ourselves. What can liberate us? The words of Jesus: Love yourself, love your neighbor, love your enemy. Doesn't it come down to the same thing? Pray for healing for those who are too broken to pray for it themselves.



David Hartsough, a life-long peacemaker now in his 80s, tells how he, as a young white man, joined black friends in the non-violent civil rights movement. They sat together in lunch counters through the south, and were often arrested. But one owner in Virginia decided not to have them arrested but simply not to serve them. They sat there for two days. White customers swore at them, spat on them, put burning

cigarettes down the backs of their shirts, punched them so hard in the stomach that they crumbled to the floor. Then a man pushed a switchblade against him saying, "You have two seconds to get out of here before I stick this through your heart." David realized he had two seconds to decide if he really took this nonviolence seriously. He said, "Friend, do what you believe is right, and I will try to love you anyway." The man's hand wavered, then dropped. He left without a word.<sup>2</sup>



Could I do it? Could you? We are sinners, we fail; but we are also saints, capable of loving without reservation. What does this great cloud of witnesses, burning among us, remind us? What does the Bible teach? Love shall overcome. "God subjects everything to love and we— we are the embodiment of that love, which conquers everything and fills everything and completes everything. We are the body, and Love is what makes us alive." Love shall overcome.

Please join me in a three minute meditation.

 Resting in Love – Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations

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<sup>2</sup> You can hear David Hartsough tell his own story in a video interview at the nonprofit he founded, [https://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/david\\_hartsough](https://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/david_hartsough). He is also co-founder, with Mel Duncan, of the Nonviolent Peaceforce, and the author of *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist*.



***On All Saints Day, we remember more than our human ancestors:***

*When I say that the land is my ancestor, that is a scientific statement:*

The land impacts our genome just as our human ancestors do. We are born on it, die on it; we come from it and return to it. The land and the waters, oceans and rivers, are part of us, relatives and ancestors in a very real way. *Patty Krawek, Anishinaabe and Ukrainian*

Prayers ( with the Prayer of St. Francis)

Author and source of love, you have woven us into a community of love and faith, and given us to one another to tend and care for each other. We pray for those especially dear to us, as we name them aloud or in our hearts. And we pray for those who profess to hate us or wish us harm.

Prince of Peace, Make us channels of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love with all our soul.

For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen