

## Devotion – Week of Christ the King, 2021

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this week, I am reminded that some of us may not feel very thankful. It's been a hard year. Actually, it's been a hard almost two years. Just when we think we're safe to unmask, some new variety of COVID shows up. Just when we think our prayer list has gotten short, a number of illnesses, surgeries, and deaths show up. It's hard to feel hopeful at times, even though that is what Christ calls us to be – hopeful for ourselves and our neighbors in a world that at times seem pretty crazy.

This week we've followed two murder trials in the headlines: the Kyle Rittenhouse and Travis McMichael trials, with his father and a neighbor on trial as accessories. Both men picked up guns and shot people, claiming self defense. Kyle Rittenhouse was cleared of all 5 charges, and it remains to be seen what will happen to the 3 men involved in the shooting of Ahmaud Arbery. Videos of the shootings in both cases have been shown over and over on the news. Families have been in the courtroom when autopsy photos were shown. It has been a horrifying and unbelievable week of courtroom drama. And the bottom line is that three people are dead, and one severely injured. For no real good reason. Three people shot in the midst of a white fascist/anti-fascist confrontation. One person shot because he was the "wrong" color in the wrong place at the wrong time, and he acted suspicious by entering a house under construction.

It shouldn't be like this. People should not be carrying guns around acting like "citizen" police. Police should handle disturbances or suspicious actions, not "citizens" with guns. We've become a nation where boundaries between vigilante justice and respect for our police force to do the right thing are being crossed repeatedly. That means that we have lost our sense of security as citizens in this country, and that is a dangerous place for us to try to dwell in as Christians. We're going to have to put on that "armor of God" I preached about several weeks ago, and walk out in faith that we can help our community do better. We're going to have to count our blessings anyway and live every day with hope for a better future. That is our "job" as followers of Christ. And it's a hard, hard job at times. So let us reach out to each other for support and prayers and strength during this season where we are called to count our blessings.

Howard Thurman wrote a poem, called "The Sacrament of Christmas," which I find useful in these unsettling days. I leave you with these sacred, blessed words.

### The Sacrament of Christmas

*By Howard Thurman*

I make an act of faith toward all humankind,  
Where doubts would linger and suspicions brood.

I make an act of joy toward all sad hearts,  
Where laughter pales and tears abound.

I make an act of <sup>strength</sup> toward feeble things,  
Where life grows dim and death draws near.

I make an act of trust toward all life,  
Where fears preside and distrusts keep watch.

I make an act of love toward friend and foe,  
Where trust is weak and hate burns bright.

I make a deed to God of all my days —  
And look out on life with quiet eyes.

May this week of Thanksgiving be one of grateful thanks for the blessings God has bestowed on us all.

**Jeanne**