

November 7, 2021
All Saints' Sunday, Year B
Isaiah 25:6-9
Revelation 21:1-6a
John 11:32-44
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Norwood, MA
Pastor Amanda L. Warner

What Time is It?

Every year, in our corner of the world and in our corner of the church, two things happen on the first Sunday of November.

One is Daylight Saving Time ends. The other is All Saints Sunday. Perhaps, since it happens every year, I should be a little bit embarrassed that this is the first year that I've noticed the connection between the two.

I have always kind of liked the end of Daylight Saving Time, since I'm a night person. I know that it makes me sound a little bit weird when I cheer for the return of an earlier night, but I do like it.

Maybe what I like about it is the illusion of the extra hour to the day on the Saturday before the time change. I don't sleep that much on Saturday nights, so I'm pretty sure that it's not the illusion of the extra hour of sleep, that's so appealing to me.

But as I've aged and listened to people who think differently than I do, both people I know personally and people who have studied the supposed benefits and the drawbacks of ending Daylight Saving Time and fiddling with our clocks at all, I must admit, that I have come around to seeing the wisdom, of setting our clocks ahead in March, and then never falling back, never resetting them in the fall.

According to many state legislatures and national politicians the potential advantages of a permanent Daylight Saving Time, far outweigh the benefits of falling back to standard time for a few months every year.

Did you know that Daylight Saving Time was adopted by many nations, including the United States during World War I as a measure intended to use less

fuel for light and heat during people's dark, but waking hours, so that fuel, mainly coal, could be saved for the war effort? Most nations went back to standard time, until World War II when they adopted Daylight Saving Time again to save fuel for the war effort.

After that many nations retained Daylight Saving Time as a continuing conservation effort and a way to maximize the sunlit hours of the day and align them with most people's "normal" waking hours.

Daylight Saving time is used in over 70 countries worldwide, however, the beginning and ending dates of Daylight Saving Time vary from country to country. (<https://www.timeanddate.com/time/dst/history.html>)

There are many states that are seeking to make Daylight Saving Time permanent, including: Alabama, Georgia, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Idaho, Louisiana, Ohio, South Carolina, Utah, Wyoming, Arkansas, Delaware, Maine, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington, Florida and California.

This seems to be one of the few issues that has bipartisan agreement in our country. Some of the states I just mentioned are red states and some are blue states. Our own senator Ed Markey from Massachusetts, a democrat, supports making Daylight Saving Time permanent, as does senator Marco Rubio, a republican from Florida.

Apparently, though, making this happen from state to state is not as easy one might think because it calls for more than just agreement in a state legislature.

Unbeknownst, certainly to me, and I suspect to many, there is a Federal law called the 1966 Uniform Time Act, which became law because of the inconsistent way that states had been observing Daylight Saving Time until it was passed.

According to the Uniform Time Act, states either have to change the clocks to Daylight Saving Time at a specified time and day or stick with standard time throughout the year.

So, states and territories can decide to skip Daylight Saving Time altogether, and some have, including: Arizona, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

But what states can't do if they move to Daylight Saving Time in the spring is decide not to switch back to standard time in the fall and make it the permanent time.

Those who have studied making Daylight Saving Time permanent and who advocate for it, say that some of the advantages are: a reduction in car crashes, fewer cardiac problems and strokes, improved mental health, less crime, increased economic growth, and increases in physical fitness.

Many people, who, unlike me, do not enjoy the early darkness of the late fall and early winter evenings, just have a gut feeling that they don't like the disruption of the twice a year time change, their reasons are: they don't like coming home from work in the dark, less daylight to do outside activities, less sunlight during waking hours in general, and the time it takes to get ourselves and our kids and our pets adjusted to the new schedule.

[\(https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/11/04/daylight-saving-time-legislation-fall-back/6233980001/\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/11/04/daylight-saving-time-legislation-fall-back/6233980001/)

I am certain that our dog, Haste is going to be freaking out this afternoon at 4:00, thinking that we've forgotten to feed her altogether, because her dinner time is at 5:00. Like I said, I've never minded the ending of Daylight Saving Time, except for not looking forward to being whined at by my dog for an hour for a couple of days while she adjusts but in conversation with others, who are profoundly bothered by it, I have learned to enjoy the "spring ahead" day and look forward to it and see its benefits, if not for my own sake, then for theirs.

For me, the time change this year was particularly disruptive. Early this morning, I kept looking at the clocks in our house that don't adjust themselves to Daylight Saving Time and having mini panics.

Is that the time? Is that the real time? What time is it? Really?

As I walked through the church I saw analogue, battery operated clocks hanging in nearly every room and they're all telling me the same thing. I don't know what time it is.

And then I turn to the readings for today and find out the clocks that are surrounding me are telling me the truth. I really don't know what time it is. Because the clocks that surround us, are not the only things that are telling us different times.

That's what I noticed about All Saints Day this year, the thing that I have missed year after year after year, as I have "fallen back" into Standard Time on the same day when we step into a liturgical, scriptural, theological time warp in the church calendar, All Saints Day, when we remember the past, glimpse the future, and experience them both in the present.

Our readings for today are, of course, about many things, but one thing that they're about is time.

Our first reading presents us with a vision of a feast in the end times, a feast that God prepares for all of God's people on the mountain of God's holiness. But that feast is not today's feast, it is a future feast, a vision of the future, when death will be destroyed, when tears will be wiped away, and when shame will be removed as God's reality and God's faithfulness will be made clear in the sight of and to the benefit of all people. This reading invites us to faithfulness now, because of the promise of fulfillment later, at an unknown, but certainly coming time.

This is what Isaiah says will be the reaction of the faithful to the fulfillment of God's promises:

It will be said on that day,

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he '

might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;

let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation (Isaiah 25:9).

This reading invites us to look forward, to a day when our patience, when our trust, when our willingness to sit with the questions, with the mysteries of the tears of this present time, will find joy and peace and salvation in the God who is working for us. It invites us to look forward to a meal we will share on the mountain of God, with the saints who are beyond death, for death will be destroyed.

This reading also makes me remember. It takes me back to the past, to both of my grandparents' funerals, when this was read as the Old Testament reading; Donald and Frances Arlene Morgan, two of my personal saints.

I look back and I remember their deaths, and I remember commending them to God at their funerals, I remember celebrating their lives and their faith, and when I hear these words, I look forward, to sitting with them at a meal again. And I hope that there will be pancakes.

And I wonder what time it is.

Our reading from Revelation is definitely another time travel event. It was written about 1900 years ago, give or take a few decades. It was written in our past, but much of it is about the present of the man who wrote it, John of Patmos, and the people that he wrote to, the still very new churches of Asia Minor, who heard these words read to them less than 100 years after Jesus' resurrection and who were both being oppressed by the Roman Empire and afraid that there were worse persecutions to come.

But for the people who first heard these words almost two millennia ago and for us, the part of Revelation that we heard read today is about their future and ours.

It is one of the many visions that was given to John to share with the churches. It is the final vision, the culmination of the extraordinary collection of horrors and beauties, of fears and hopes, that are contained in the book of Revelation. The final vision is one of promise, a gift of hope to the church, that after all things have passed away, after the sufferings and persecutions have ended, after the oppressive empires have been destroyed, after heaven and earth have passed away, God will still be there, bringing blessing and healing, and not hope, but fulfillment.

A future, no one could have seen coming without the gift of John's vision, a vision of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, undivided, beautiful and holy, where tears will be wiped away, where death will be no more, where mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

It might feel like we're heading for destruction, far too often that we have brought upon ourselves, but we find in this vision that there is mercy for us, there is compassion for us, there is healing for us for the final act of God's creation is newness, life, and restored holiness.

But even this reading is a little confusing. It's a vision of the future for sure, but it also contains a promise for the present.

The loud voice from the throne that speaks the future promises of life in the holy city says this, "See the home of God is among mortals" (Revelation 21:3). Then it says, "God will dwell with them and they will be his peoples" (Revelation 21:3).

But the first thing it says is not in the future tense, "will be". It is in the present tense, "is". "See. The home of God is among mortals."

And so, we have this future promise of a holy city where pain and suffering and tears and death will be no more. But we also have the present assurance, that God is with us. Right now. Today. The home of God is among mortals. God is Emmanuel. God with us. God is the beginning and the end. The Alpha and Omega, the ever-present one. And I wonder what time it is.

Our gospel reading is about time too, but maybe more the kind of time that we understand. Because who among us has not had the experience of showing up somewhere late and being scolded for it?

Who among us has not had the experience of waiting for someone to show up or to call us back or to answer the text or email waiting with anticipation, turning to frustration, turning to anger as time ticks by and then runs out?

In our gospel reading for today, Mary and Martha were waiting and Jesus was late. So, when Jesus finally showed up, at first, Mary didn't even meet him, because she was at the grave of her brother.

That was what they had been waiting for. They had been waiting for Jesus to come and heal their brother, Lazarus, their brother who they knew Jesus loved.

We know it too, because John 11:5 says that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." And in our reading for today in verses 35 and 36 Jesus weeps at the tomb of Lazarus and the people who saw him crying there said, "See how he loved him" (John 11:36).

Jesus loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary, but still he had come late, too late to heal Lazarus, and Lazarus had died.

We know that kind of time. The time when time runs out. When prayers have not brought hoped for healing, when the doctors say that there's nothing more that they can do, when we see a loved one's life slip away.

We know that time, the grief time, the shocked, the numb, the pleading, the angry time.

We know it, and we know what time it is for Martha and Mary. And maybe even in some way for Jesus too.

But here's what we don't know. We don't know what it's like to have a loved one dead and buried, four days gone, and have the voice of Jesus speak and see the grave give our dear one back.

We don't know that kind of time at all.

But this story gives us hope. Because today is a remembering time, a time when we live in the past, remembering those saints who have gone before us, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, friends, children, husbands, wives, pastors, Sunday School teachers, co-workers, and companions.

But today is also a day when we recognize the presence of those saints still with us today, supporting us, the saints of God, surrounding the throne of God and interceding for the church.

And it is a day when we look forward to a time when there will be no more separation between us and the saints who have gone before us.

Today is a day that God holds; the God who holds us, the God who holds all time.

And I know what time it is. It is God's time.

Today, time is weird. Not because of the time change which most of us have endured and some of us have enjoyed, but because today, we see, perhaps more clearly than we do on other days, that God's time is not our time.

God is eternal, eternally present in our past, eternally with us now, in our present, and eternally before us, in what is for us the future of promise that God has prepared for us.

And our loved ones, the saints we celebrate today, who have moved beyond our sight, are with God in that eternal time, in that eternal place, in that eternal way of being, and because they are with God, they are also with us. Living, because God's love conquers death, present, because they live in God's eternal time and presence, and waiting for us, because they stand in the future promised to all of us, the future of hope, the future of peace, the future where there will be no more tears, where death, and mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

And on that day, we will say, And on this day we do say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:9) Amen.