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All Saints Sunday B
Peace, Seattle
November 4, 2012
Isaiah 25:5-9; Revelation 21:1-6a
John 11:32-44

WEAVING THE KINGDOM

There's a picture that hangs in my study at home. A picture of a woman's hands weaving together separate strands of what will one day become a basket. The hands belong to Laura Somersal, a Pomo Tribal Elder.

They are old, these hands, they are brown, and weathered. Wrinkles cover every part of their surface—yet they are supple and strong. They know what they're about. They know what they are creating.

When I look at the picture, I think of these hands, and I imagine:
- I see them gathering lengths of willow from the river banks;
- digging for pine root; harvesting young beargrass in the spring.
- Stripping lengths of maidenhair fern, or peeling woodwordia and dying it with alder bark.
- Gathering the strands together into bundles, putting them in order.

Then, when they are ready, weaving them together; twisting them to fit one over another, tightly, neatly, evenly, row upon row, to form a bowl, a hat, a baby basket—each with its own design. Creating a tapestry from the gifts of the earth.

And this woman, she sings as she works! And her songs are woven into the basket; become part of it. Her prayers and thoughts move from her heart, down through her fingers; move through the root, the fern, the quill, to become a part of the work, the whole. The stuff that holds it together.

Out of the mixed gathering of gifts from the earth, her intention takes shape, a design is formed. Yes, the weaver knows what she is creating. And so she weaves. Patiently, steadily, rhythmically, her hands bring into being what already exists in her mind.

Today, this All Saints Sunday I ask you to imagine with me that God, like a Basket Weaver, is weaving the Kingdom. That God like this woman is at work gathering the separate and distant strands of people from each time and place, and fashioning us into a community, a divine fellowship, a new creation which will one day be whole and complete.

Imagine with me! Our loved ones and friends, the apostles and prophets, the big people and the little people whose lives of faith we lift up in our memories today—Lyla & Elmer, K & Gena, Elma & Grace—are all part of that weaving. All are important strands, which God, having chosen, is working into the marvelous design that's been growing since time began.

Today we view the Kingdom through the lives of those who have gone before us.
We catch a glimpse of God's handiwork in progress as we remember who they are, what place they have had in our lives, and the faith they have given witness to in bold or perhaps more subtle ways.

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And we also view the Kingdom as it takes shape in the words of our texts.
As it emerges from out of the vision of Isaiah and of John. Each one of these stories provides us with a window through which we look toward the promises of God; toward a future God has in store for all of creation.

Friends, imagine with me! Look with me past the turmoil and chaos of our broken world, toward that space and time when God's reign will come in all its fullness. When the basket God is weaving will be complete.

A time, says Isaiah, when people from every tribe and race will gather on the mountain for a FEAST to end all feasts, and death will be swallowed up forever.

A time, writes John, when a new heaven and a new earth will descend from God's gracious hand; and mourning and crying and pain will be no more, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Jesus too, standing next to the grave that holds his friend, gives us a view of that kingdom.
LAZARUS, COME OUT! he cried then.

CHILD OF GOD, COME OUT! he will cry. UNBIND HIM, UNBIND HER, AND LET THEM GO.

The lessons from Scripture this morning invite us to dream and to hope.
They provide us with views toward that great promised day when, what God began on the first day of creation; what God prepared the world for through the life of Jesus, his death and rising, will be complete, the goal attained, the community formed, the covenant fulfilled.

And God will have finished the task of weaving together from every corner of the earth, from every nation, every tribe and tongue, his chosen People, a communion of saints, redeemed and made whole. Woven together patiently, steadily, lovingly; fashioned into the fullness of what God has been intending all along. **Imagine it, friends!**

And imagine, too, that you are part of that weaving. Imagine that God, from the moment you emerged from your watery birth, has been preparing a place for you, has seen where you will be fitted into the design of the Kingdom.

For like a weaver of baskets, God gathers each one of us, each person, each strand, and shapes us slowly, full of care and patience into what we shall one day be.

God takes the beauty and the beast in us.
Takes what is smooth and what is rough.
Takes failure and triumph; wound, cheer, brokenness.

Imagine! Picture God taking it! Gathering it all up!
- **Our convictions and our confusion,**
- **our hope and our despair,**
- **the light within us and the darkness.**

God takes it all, and having washed us in the blood of the Lamb, fashions us into a new creation. Knits us together into true community.

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Can you see it friends? God is binding the people together, gathering and weaving a design for the Kingdom which will one day be complete.

And that great cloud of witnesses who we look to today, those who have known and experienced God's eternal love, they join us at the supper table prepared by our Lord.

Imagine this too: When we come to this Table, we kneel with all those saints who have learned to rely on the promises of God.

- We take the bread and wine with the disciples in the upper room.
- We feast in the catacombs with people of the Way;
- We pray with generations long gone, and we eat with generations yet to be.

Imagine it! AND BELIEVE that God's invitation to come to the Table is an invitation to be bound together, woven into that tapestry which time and space cannot contain.

There is a picture; a picture that hangs on the wall of my mind.
It is a picture of hands weaving together separate strands of what will one day become a vessel whole, and complete.

They know what they're about, these hands. They know what they are creating.

And I have faith that their labor will not cease until all that is contained in their heart of love moves through these hands and is embodied in a living tapestry, a Kingdom basket.

AMEN.