

Sermon - Advent 3
November 21, 2021
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The truth is, I'm not surprised Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted on all counts. Despite that fact that he intentionally traveled across state lines, armed with an illegally purchased AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, seeking to engage protesters after the police shooting of an African American man, Jacob Blake. Despite recording a video fantasizing about killing African Americans two weeks before the shootings,. Despite his leaving his arraignment hearing in which he plead not guilty and going to a bar—while underage—to drink beers with members of the Proud Boys and pose with an alt-right hand sign meaning white power. Despite later that week traveling to Florida to meet with the leader of the Proud Boys. Despite the judge in his case ruling all this information irrelevant and inadmissible. Despite Rep. Paul Gosar, Republican from Arizona, who was just censured for sharing an anime video showing him killing Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, openly offering Rittenhouse an internship in his congressional office.

I'm not surprised because the structures of our nation were built with the lumber of white supremacy, and the structures mostly work just as they were meant to work. Despite everything that says those structures are horribly unjust.

Silence. Then Say:

The advent season, it will not surprise you, does not focus on the "now" but on the "not yet," or on what is to come. It literally means that: in Latin, *ad*, to, and *venire*, come. It is the start of the liturgical year, the church year, the Christian "new year" in a way. And in that sense it is an offer to rest, to say, yes, I'm not surprised by the devastation of "now," by all this shit that goes down on the daily. And, I know there is something else to come.

The text today is an advent text, in that sense. The people have been through horrors. In the midst of their struggles, this text is written in the tradition of Isaiah claiming that the Spirit of the Lord is upon him, and he casts an incredible, hopeful, joyful vision. Those who only hear unjust verdicts read in the courts instead hear good news, those who mourn are offered

garlands instead of ashes. And in a reversal worthy of the Magnificat, this voice echoing Isaiah claims that it is those who have been on the bottom who:

“shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.”

This is what is to come, the advent of a future shaped by the vision of a God who loves justice and hates wrongdoing. A future that centers the lives of those left on the bottom, under the boot, cast aside, left to suffer and die. A future, one could imagine in our context, that is led by black and brown trans and non-binary folx.

Silence. Then Say

My morning practice these days is to read a poem by an indigenous poet. I'm starting a stunning new book by Billy-Ray Belcourt, from the Driftpile Cree nation in Alberta, Canada. His book *This Wound is a World* begins with a quote from Michel Foucault, a queer philosopher and social critic, “I think we have —and

can have—a right to be free.” And Belcourt continues, “Poetry is creaturely. It resists categorical capture. It is a shape-shifting, defiant force in the world. Indeed, it runs counter to the world.” I wonder as I read this if poetry is necessarily like advent, always running beyond the “now” to name the “to come,” “promise” defiantly facing down the “present.” In a recent interview, Belcourt said, “What’s striking about joy is that it exists under conditions of intense duress. Rarely, in circumstances where state violence rears its head, is joy non-existent. That we are joyful reveals the impossibility of total conquest or oppression.”

Silence.

Amen. We share the sermon at St. Lydia’s...