

“God is Our Help & Sure Foundation”

Psalm 146 Deuteronomy 6:1-9 Mark 12:30-31 Matthew 7:24-27 Romans 8:35, 37-39, 1 Corinthians 13:1-10, 12-13

Pastor James York

Prayer for Understanding Holy Spirit thank you for giving us life. Guide us in truth, enlighten us and set our hearts ablaze so every moment of our lives can be illumined with your amazing grace, steadfast love and abundant life. Amen.

Whatever the outcome of the election, God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. Fear, hate, and violence will cease. God’s steadfast love endures forever. The psalmist is blunt. Do not put your trust in elected officials, leaders, pastors, in mortals, in whom there is no help. Put your hope in God. Build your life on God. Wrap yourself in love. The psalmist sings: **Psalm 146 Praise the Lord! Let all that I am praise the Lord. I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. Do not put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there. When they breathe their last, they return to the earth and all their plans die with them. But joyful are those who have God as their helper, whose hope is in the Lord their God. God made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. God keeps every promise forever. God gives justice to the oppressed and food to the hungry. The Lord frees the prisoners. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are weighed down. The Lord loves the godly. The Lord protects the foreigners among us. God cares for the orphans and widows, but God frustrates the plans of the wicked. God is in charge—always! God will be your God throughout the generations. Praise the Lord!”**

God’s desire for humanity is that everyone loves each other, that we share blessings, that we are a worldwide community of equity, that our hope is in God, that our guidance comes from our gracious God. God does not want anyone to be ruled over, oppressed, or controlled by monarchs, emperors, judges, rulers, a president or any human made power system. After the Israelites were freed from slavery, God commanded everyone to love. It was our ancestors who begged God for a leader. God warned that the temptations of power, money, and stuff will often corrupt leaders. God warned that leaders will do all sorts of terrible things, including promoting fear and hate, dividing people and taking your children to war. Still our ancestors demanded a monarch, a leader, a hierarchy of power. The disciples, and many followers, urged Jesus to be an earthly political leader. Jesus refused and taught that true leadership is serving everyone with love.

God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. Deuteronomy declares: **Deuteronomy 6:1-9 “This is the commandment, the rules and regulations, that God, your God, commanded me to teach you to live out in the land you are about to cross into to possess. This is so that you will live in deep reverence before God lifelong, observing all God’s rules and regulations that I am commanding you, you and your children and your grandchildren, living good long lives. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that you will have a good life, a life of abundance and bounty, just as God promised, in a land abounding in milk and honey. Attention, Israel! God, our God! God the one and only! Love God, your God, with your whole heart: love God with all that is in you, love God with all you have got! Write these commandments that I have given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning to when you fall into bed at night. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder; inscribe them on the doorposts of your homes and on your city gates.”**

When Jesus was asked regarding the greatest commandment Jesus answered: **Mark 12:30-31 NRSV “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

Jesus taught: **Matthew 7:24-27 “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and does not obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”**

Depending on who is elected, we may have more storms or fewer storms in our future. Regardless of who is elected, God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. Our quest is to be compassionate, tenacious, resolute in loving God and loving all people.

The Apostle Paul explains that presidents, governments, fear, hate, nothing can separate us from God's love. Nothing should diminish our quest for love. **Romans 8:35, 37-39 NLT** **“Can anything ever separate us from God's love? Does it mean God no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through God who loves us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Corinthians 13:1-10,12-13 NLT** **“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but did not love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but did not love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I did not love others, I would have gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and love keeps no record of being wronged. Love does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, love never loses faith, love is always hopeful, and love endures through every circumstance. Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”**

Fear not. God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. Many Christians have exclaimed: draw a line that includes us and excludes others; and Jesus is always on the other side of the line. Jesus is always for bringing everyone into loving community. So, if you have drawn some lines this election season, know that God is for both the people on the other side of your line and you. We are commanded to love. We are called to compassionately welcome everyone into community and to passionately advocate for the way we deem to be the most excellent way of love for all people. We are commanded to never dehumanize, name call, or exclude anyone. Dehumanizing leads to fear, hate, and an escalation of awful, unloving actions against the dehumanized. Love helps us be non-anxious, to communicate with “I” statements what I think, what I value while remaining connected in relationship and in community.

If a person is elected that you perceive to be against love or if a person is elected that you perceive to be for love, remember the wisdom of the psalmist. Do not put your trust in leaders. Put your trust in God. God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. The cosmos is being transformed to eternal glory by God loving through all people. Heaven will be experienced on earth when all people are able to love completely. An elected official will probably have little to do with good transformation. Good change happens when a significant group of people love tenaciously.

The book of Confessions states: “All those who live in union with God, whether on earth or with God in heaven, are “saints.” Our communion with God makes us members one of another... God removes all that divides us from each other. Breaking down every wall of hostility, God makes us, who are many, one body in God. The ties that bind us in God are deeper than any other human relationship.” All Saints is wonderful, comforting, and inspiring. In God, everyone is united in an eternal bond of love. In God, we are united with those in heaven. God's amazing grace transforms every fear, hate, division, anything that diminishes life to pure goodness, love and joy. In heaven, all that is not glorious about us and our relationships is transformed so all is pure glory.

If you want only the comforting aspects of today's scriptures and All Saints, then now is the time to tune out and daydream until the hymn. If you want to be challenged, I invite you to wrestle with the challenging aspects. Bad theology leads to absolutes, “I am right”, “you are wrong” conclusions. Good theology wrestles, generates questions and inspires one to find more loving ways.

Scripture declares that everyone is created in the image of God. God loves everyone. Nothing can separate anyone from God. Love is eternal. We are commanded to love God and love everyone. Our wrestling begins when we extrapolate from these scriptures. For clarity, I will make statements. Your act of worship is to wrestle with these statements to discern God's message for you. You will likely embrace some and reject some. We are to see, value, and hear every person. Loving all people involves never perceiving yourself as better than anyone else. All people are

worthy enough and have aspects that are good and loving, because everyone is made in God's image and God loves everyone.

All people are saints. Everyone regardless of their faith, religion, actions or thoughts are saints. Even if someone has no faith, no religion, no belief in God, they are still created in God's image, they are still loved by God, they are still connected to God and thereby you are in community with them through the bond of God's love. We are siblings with all people. God's grace will filter out all that is unloving in each person and glorify all that is loving. God is loving to remove all that separates all people.

Trump is a saint. Harris is a saint. The people living in Israel are saints. The people living in Gaza are saints. Those who frustrate you are saints. Those who you perceive to be against love are saints. All people are saints. The image of God, a spec of goodness, a morsel of love, is in every person no matter how distorted, buried and twisted. God is loving through people to expand love, to unite everyone in community. Heaven is coming to earth, an eternal time, when there is no division between anyone, all are at peace, all are united in love and all keep their unique goodness.

Jesus' radical love for everyone frustrated many people. The religious leaders demanded some people should be judged, some people should be excluded. At the time Jesus was on earth in human flesh, the religious leaders considered the Samaritans to be the worst people. Samaritans were not Jewish, some were pagan, some had no faith at all, some were violent. Jesus taught the parable of the good Samaritan. Despite the urging of the disciples, and his followers, Jesus would not rebel against corrupt leaders. Jesus made a point to heal a person from every group that was judged, outcast, or dehumanized including a child, woman, leper, soldier, a person with a mental disorder, a centurion's gay lover, a demon possessed person, a paralyzed person, an immigrant, a queer water carrier, a poor person. Who is being dehumanized today? Who is on the other side of the line? Jesus is always for anyone who is on the other side of any line. Jesus taught love. Jesus loves everyone.

All Saints is an invitation to see and hear everyone, to celebrate the goodness and love in everyone. All Saints is a call to be tenacious in love, bringing heaven to earth, letting God's love flow through us tearing down every barrier, removing every division, uniting everyone in loving community, celebrating everyone as our sibling. All Saints is a celebration of the image of God, goodness and love that is in each person, that will be glorified and enjoyed by all for eternity.

During this election week remember that God's desire is for there to be no hierarchy in humanity. God's love is guiding us to a time when everyone will love each other so there will be no need for a president, judge, pastor, or leader. Be comforted by the psalmist. No matter who is elected our hope, our help does not come from leaders. God is our sure foundation. Love is our home and sanctuary. Love is eternal. Amen