“The World is Not With Us Enough”
Psalm 34:1-10 & Matthew 5:1-12
Rev. Maeve Kieran Hammond
1 November 2026

To start this time of sharing and reflecting on the Good News of our Sacred Scripture, I would like to introduce the voice of someone else who has shared and reflected on some of the same text that we have heard today. She was an English-born, naturalized-American, whose work “embraced a wide variety of genres and themes, including nature lyrics, love poems, protest poetry, and poetry inspired by her faith in God” in the twentieth century (Poetry Foundation 2026). Her writing bears the spirit of dissension and justice, alongside the remarkable ability to seek unity and interconnection. She wrote from the poster-clad streets and meeting halls of the anti-war movement. She wrote, too, from the pages of the unconventional, personal Black Mountain writer movement, which elevated the everyday and eschewed the structures and strictures of past literary and artistic expectations. Her name was Denise Levertov.

The poem I’d like to share with you today is called “O Taste and See.” It is rather short and sparse, ordinary at first glance. It’s a piece that you read once, think you’ve figured it out, return to it, and realize you knew nothing. “O Taste and See” is a poetic response to Psalm 34, one of our lectionary readings today. Here it is.

> The world is
> not with us enough
> O taste and see
>
> the subway Bible poster said,
> meaning The Lord, meaning
> if anything all that lives
> to the imagination’s tongue,

grief, mercy, language,
tangerine, weather, to
breathe them, bite,
savor, chew, swallow, transform

into our flesh our
deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince,
living in the orchard and being

hungry, and plucking
the fruit.

If the first two verses of Levertov's poem sound familiar to you, you may be thinking of the English, eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century poet William Wordsworth. Published in 1807, his poem "The World is Too Much With Us" is the exact opposite of Levertov's "O Taste and See." He laments the changes to the geography of his homeland, as well as what he perceives as changes of attitude in his fellow countrymen, spurred by the First Industrial Revolution. The world, to Wordsworth, is machine and steam and iron and building and profit. We should turn our backs on the world. We should return to "the Nature that is ours," as he says: the sea and the moon, the "winds that will be howling at all hours."

Levertov shows that we can have both: we can have "the Nature that is ours" and the world that we live in now. These concepts, and these lived experiences, are not mutually exclusive. Nature and the World can coexist, and, maybe, even work together in harmony.

Today is All Saints' Day. When we recall the lives of the saints, what comes to mind? For me, I think of St. Joan of Arc, whose likeness we have in one of our stained glass windows on the lectern side of the Sanctuary. I think of St. Francis of Assisi. We

may picture St. Francis in his brown habit, with a rope tied around his waist and animals at his feet. Did you know, though, that he began his ministry by repairing chapels and caring for the sick in his hometown? Did you know that, later in his ministry, he travelled the world and was incredibly social? I think of Dorothy Day, who remains under consideration for canonization. She and Peter Maurin, her longtime collaborator, co-created the Catholic Worker Movement, “a pacifist movement that combines direct aid for the poor and homeless with nonviolent direct action” (Wikipedia 2026). Whereas Peter Maurin eventually focused his ministry on supporting rural farming communities, Dorothy Day served her urban neighbors in New York City, many of whom experienced homelessness, financial and food insecurity, and mental illness.

Scripture does not tell us that we can find God in one place or another. God is not only in the most ornate, pristine sanctuaries or the most common, dirt floors. God is equally among Creation and among the people. As the psalmist writes in Psalm 34, “Here was a lowly man who called–God listened, and delivered him from all his troubles. The angel of God camps around those who show awe, and rescules them.” God’s presence and mercy are boundless, unrestricted by space and time. When Jesus preaches his Sermon on the Mount, he is at once among Creation and among the people. He does not bless only the ones who are constantly on their knees in solemn, secluded prayer or have abandoned the world to seek isolation and self-abnegation like a desert ascetic. No, he blesses all of us, without exception. He blesses the life of the world, the vitality of being, the joy of being together, the mercy of extending a compassionate hand to neighbor, stranger, and enemy. He blesses the mourners, the

sacred transition from life to death, the humility of not knowing, the workers and activisits who thirst for justice, the ones who forgive and reconcile again and again.

We cannot avoid the realities of our world. We must, as Buddhist teacher and clinical psychologist Tara Brach puts it, embrace this reality with *radical acceptance.* We must hold both the calm of the natural world with the chaos of the machines that are part of our daily living. We must hold the disappointment we feel by the actions of others we deem to be wrong or misguided, and we must hold immense hope, love, and compassion for humankind. We must “taste and see” all aspects of our mortal lives: grief, fear, sadness, awe, excitement, anxiety. We must “taste and see” God: the peace that abides in the center of all of our hearts and the reassuring waters of forgiveness. We must take and absorb the elements: the grain ground into flour, the grapes crushed into juice. Not only must we taste and see, but we must also touch, smell, and hear.

Friends, hear the Good News: the presence of God is alive and abundant. The spirit of the living God is in every corner, every cell, every fiber of this vast and complicated universe. God is in our very senses. Can you feel God, right here, right now, with you?

May we go forward to radically accept all that this life has to offer. May we go forward to taste and see the possibility of what God has in store for us. Amen.