

A lot has happened since I stood here in this pulpit one week ago. And this time I'm not talking about the announcement of Starbucks new Holiday cups. Before the election on Tuesday, it seemed that most people couldn't wait for November 8<sup>th</sup> to come. For some it was the exciting possibility of electing the first woman to the office of President of the United States. For others it was the excitement of turning the system inside out and electing someone who was not a career politician. I think for all of us, we looked forward to being done with the vitriol and the name calling. We gladly anticipated the day when we wouldn't have to watch any more mud-slinging television ads or when the news would cover other important stories besides the race for the White House. We looked forward to Wednesday when it would all be over and we could get back to our lives as they were before all the tension of the election took center stage.

Professional pollsters, journalists and many average citizens all believed that although Trump had huge rallies and was getting a lot of attention from the press, that his lack of political experience, his racist, sexist, and otherwise prejudiced comments, the withholding of his tax returns and the stories of his bankruptcies and refusing to pay contractors, would result in a loss. On the night of the election, the New York Times gave Hillary an 85% chance of winning the election. So when the returns began to come in, a wave of shock and disbelief struck many people. Once Hillary conceded, I noticed a tone of not only grief, but fear among my friends and colleagues. Fear that based on the platform and campaign promises of our new President-elect that their same-sex marriages will no longer be recognized. Fear that their loved ones who are undocumented but who have children born in this country will be rounded up and deported even after living in this country for more than a decade. A colleague expressed that her teenage transgender son was in tears because he gets his testosterone from Planned Parenthood and he fears that the clinic will be shut down. I have heard fear about the future of our planet. As scientists warn that we are teetering on the edge of the point of no return when it comes to climate change, the President-elect proclaims that there is nothing to worry about because climate change is a hoax.

I don't like to be an alarmist and my optimistic nature tends to keep me from panicking but if I'm honest, I share the fear and the grief. To be clear, as a preacher, I ethically and legally can't endorse a political candidate from the pulpit. And as a pastor, it is important that I am able to attend to the needs of all my parishioners. So, it is important for me to say that my own fear and grief is not based in an allegiance to one political party over the other. It is based in my deep concern and love for the welfare and dignity of God's children.

Some people have taken his election as validation of their hatred and are acting out in word and deed.

Here are some things that happened just the first 24 hours after the election.<sup>1</sup>

- Near San Francisco, a home in Noe Valley flew a nazi flag where kids walk by to get to school.
- A white middle school student brought a Trump sign to school and told a black classmate it was time for him to get "back in place".
- A gay New York City man getting on a bus was told that he should "Enjoy the concentration camps, faggot!"
- The NYU Muslim Students Association found the word "Trump!" scrawled on the door of their prayer room.
- Parents of children of color spent the day picking up their children early from elementary, middle, and high schools across the country because they were inundated with slurs and harassment and unable to study.
- A group of Hispanic kids in Raleigh were taunted by white children, telling them they were "going back to Mexico."
- At a high school in Maple Grove, Minnesota racist graffiti was scrawled onto the door of a bathroom stall saying things like "whites only"

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<sup>1</sup> <http://johnpavlovitz.com/2016/11/10/white-christians-who-voted-for-donald-trump-fix-this-now/>

I hoped that these incidents were fueled by a short burst of post-election adrenaline, but as the week unfolded, I read about more and more these attacks continuing. Not to mention that the most active chapter of the KKK has scheduled a parade in celebration of the election in North Carolina to take place the first week of December. I was pleased to see that both political parties have condemned the parade. I am young enough that this is an America that is unfamiliar to me. I am also aware that my privilege as a white, heterosexual, cisgender person also means that my life has been sheltered from many of these types of experiences. I never believed that we were a country that had evolved beyond racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and other types of bigotry. But I did think we had moved away from a time when expressions of these prejudices were acceptable or inspired by the leaders of our country.

As I searched for a word of hope for this week, the lectionary text from Isaiah that Marcia read for us gave me at least a glimmer. God envisions a day when natural enemies can live in harmony. When there is not such thing as predator and prey for even the fiercest predator, the lion, will be nourished with straw like the ox. Lives will not be cut short, no one will labor in vain and all will be blessed. (Deep sigh) Sounds wonderful! So... when exactly is this perfect utopia being created? Any chance we might see this new world and new heavens say, in the next 60 days?

The day after racist graffiti showed up at Maple Grove Senior High, students and the administration fought back with love.<sup>2</sup> In an address to students, Principal Bart Becker told students “Don’t talk about it, be about it.” “Be about love. Be about respect. Be about empathy, kindness, inclusiveness, gratitude, patience, selflessness, humility, compassion, resolve and strength.” Students lined the halls to welcome each other to school with applause and cookies. They wrote notes of encourage to each other and posted them on bulletin boards. Notes with messages like “Love always wins,” “Be

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<sup>2</sup> <http://blogs.mprnews.org/newscut/2016/11/maple-grove-kids-fight-back-against-the-racists/>

peaceful,” “have courage, be kind,” and “To every question, love is the answer.” A boulder on campus was painted with the message “Love will conquer all!”

Church, we must step out with hope that we can actively participate in co-creating God’s vision of a new earth right here, right now.

One thing is clear to me - we are a nation divided. There are open wounds and pain along all points of the political spectrum. Harvard Divinity student named Josh Gregory write this poetic commentary on the lectionary text: "Our country is looking at itself in the mirror of each other's eyes. What are you seeing? Pain, tears, bitter lies. During the solace of this hour-our Sunday and all our Sabbaths-let us stand on the pinnacle of the church spires here, high and then higher, so that we are looking farther. So that we are higher and brighter than stars in pure night. Let's lean in closer and not look away from one another so we see, so we are careful to see our Christ-lingering there, in the tired eyes. Stinging eyes that have seen shouting. Eyes that have to be opened to witness."

As we seek to work for justice and love we must be careful not to ignore the voices of those who feel unheard. That’s how we ended up in a place where anger and bigotry have found a voice. But most importantly, we must not be timid in the way we follow Jesus. Author Glenon Doyle Melton wrote the following on her Facebook page this week:<sup>3</sup>

“The Jesus we read about in the Gospel walked the Earth asking two questions everywhere he went.

Who is power forgetting? Who is religion oppressing?

And then he gathered them and ate with them and listened to them.

And so back then he found himself eating with lepers and bleeding

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/glennondoylemelton/posts/10154696987849710:0>

women and the poor and prostitutes and tax collectors. He just gathered these people and broke bread with them.

And so today- if Jesus followers asked the same questions their leader asked with his life. If we looked hard at our own communities, in our own countries today and asked:

Who is power forgetting? Who is religion oppressing?

And then we gathered those people. And ate with them. And listened to them...we'd find ourselves listening to black kids. Black women. Black men. Brown people. Muslims. Addicts. The mentally ill. Children. Gay kids. Transgender kids. Refugees. Immigrants. Widows. The financially poor.... And if we look around our churches and we do not see those faces...then we can be certain we are not doing the work that Jesus did. And we might ask ourselves if what we have is a CHURCH - where the vulnerable find allies and refuge and hope and where we step back and let the forgotten LEAD US - or if what we have ourselves is a country club where we can be comfy with folks who look and love and think just like we do."

This is the call of the Gospel my friends, and I believe it is the path to the vision of shalom that Isaiah prophesies, the vision of a new earth filled with peace. The truth is, those of us with white skin, those with a heterosexual orientation, those who were assigned male at birth and identify as male, those who are financially secure, we don't as much personally at stake. I read this week that we can't have unity until we have equality. I think that's true. We can't expect people to seek unity when there are children of God being told that they are inferior, unwanted, less than.

And I confess my own complacency in not working harder to dismantle systemic racism and oppression. I hope you will join me, as well as hold me accountable as the

pastor of this church, in putting our voices and our bodies in the way of injustice and hate. To seek dialogue with people who have a different perspective and to discern the ways God is calling us to co-create a new earth.

May it be so. Amen.