

I began this reflection on October 26.

What follows are thoughts that most likely don't quite form a coherent road to anywhere definite. I apologize for this in advance.

I do not get much peaceful sleep these days. Many of you know I play tennis and paddle. What you do not know is I also play ping-pong; only these days the ping-pong ball is in my head! With every attempt to reflect, contemplate or meditate I fail to ease the inner anxiety borne of the outer uncertainties. (Many of my friends tell me they are experiencing similar difficulty.) Recent reports show 70% of Americans are experiencing increased stress in the weeks before the election. In his sermon on All Saints Day, Pastor Mark invited us to reflect upon someone whom we idolize, is a hero, who looms larger than life. The one who came to my mind at that moment was Mark Lingle. While I admire our pastor for many reasons I consider his super power the ability to appear as though he has mastered control of his inner peace, able to manipulate it and mold it into a profound sermon – week after week. Even now in this turbulent time! I wish I could emulate a fraction of that talent. I know it has something to do with godliness. My inner turbulence does subside somewhat when I ask God to lend me his peace. It's just that I sometimes forget to ask. And I've forgotten to ask this today.

Where was I before I began rambling? Oh yes, I wanted to preface my talk by saying what follows is not so much a reflection as it is a collection of the thoughts bouncing across the ping pong table inside my head.

Back to October 26. I'm paddling the ball inside my head when a text message notification from my daughter beeps on my phone allowing me respite from my thoughts. I put aside my weaknesses to present this façade of strength and confidence for her benefit - - - always for her benefit. She is strong so long as she sees that I am strong. It allows her sure footing, and in turn it grounds me.

The reason she reached out to me this particular evening was to comment on an episode of a podcast we both subscribe to. Today's episode contained interviews with 3 women in the mid-west, and the topic was their evolving political views, or more precisely a recent change of viewpoint each had experienced.

(I do believe in separation of church and state, so I will try to omit any political comments.)

The 3 women interviewed explained how their views and opinions have changed in the past 4 years. They each spoke individually about how they have become aware of many things that had never before occurred to them, facts to which they had never given much thought at that time. Alyssa was disturbed by this; not about them changing their opinions, but by their failure to becoming informed to begin with. She thought it inexcusable that they had pledged support for issues without taking the time to become informed about them, making uninformed decisions that contributed to impactful consequences. She said that at age 18 she, as a first time voter, had taken the time to learn about issues facing our nation so she would be in a position to make a fact-based decision when it came time to do so. Yet, she said, people twice her age cast support blindly for issues that have had impactful consequences on so many people.

I reminded her about women's suffrage and how women could not even vote before 1920. How few were college educated before the second half of the twentieth century, and through the 1960's and 1970's were for the most part expected to stay home, raise children, clean house, cook meals, and do laundry. I told her my takeaway from the podcast interviews was that these women were wise enough to realize their short-sightedness, caring enough to seek the facts when they did, and brave enough to share their journey to enlightenment.

During a prior conversation Alyssa had alluded to her view that my generation caused the problems of her generation and said that when my generation (baby

boomers) was growing up things were so much easier than today. Her vision of my generation did not include Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, the aftershocks of World War II, the protests (yes, protests; her generation didn't invent them), the Soviet Union, the fight for civil rights, Watergate, Chernobyl, Star Wars, the Berlin wall, Ohio State U. The list goes on. When I asked if she learned of these events in school this was Alyssa's reply: "I know of the civil rights movement and women's suffrage, but not in-depth. However, ask me about Ancient Greece and Rome; I can give you a dissertation on those." I was astonished and dismayed. Furthermore, until she watched the movie "Bombshell", my daughter was unaware that once upon a time not so long ago, if a woman was sexually assaulted, molested, even raped, she never spoke of it because the assumed norm was that if she wanted to keep her job she had to keep her silence.

We discussed so much more, but I promised you I would try leave out the politically poignant parts.

And so, Alyssa asks, as do her contemporaries (the Gen-Z's), as do our millenials, as do our Gen-X's, and as may all those who follow, "How many more people will be abused, murdered, discriminated against, left to perish in pandemics, excluded from opportunities, denied equality and justice? How much more will it cost my generation and generations to come before we learn to live together and respect each other and honestly treat each other as equals?"

I could not give answers. I was only able offer hope.

So I told her:

- We cannot change what has happened, but we can affect what will occur.
- From the ashes, new and better can emerge.
- I hope when it is all over hopefully my generation will not have left your generation more than it can handle. Your generation has the knowledge, skills, and technology to make things right. Your generation has the knowledge, skills and technology to make things right. Your generation has the ware withal and desire to do so.

- But above all this, I told her, never lose sight of your Faith in God because faith gives righteousness, and righteousness gives peace.

Later that day I sent to her a poem someone shared with me some 45 years ago, which I have never forgotten. It speaks of Faith, and goes like this . . .

It's going to come out all right, do you know?

The birds, the trees, the grass, they know.

They get along,

And we'll get along.

I hope I can remain strong in my daughter's eyes, even as my hope for my own generation falters. We cannot expect the Lord to make right the wrongs we inflict on others nor on ourselves. He gave us free will. He cannot fix our errors, but he does offer a light at the end, a light for the righteous by faith in Him.

I want to share two meditations. The first is an excerpt from "Jesus Calling". The second is 3 short yet potent sentences that also provide perspective.

If you are not familiar, "Jesus Calling" is a daily devotional journal written by Sarah Young. This particular devotional is an interpretation of a lesson from Jesus. It goes:

"Follow me wherever I lead, without worrying about how it will all turn out. Think of your life as an adventure, with Me as your Guide and Companion. Live in the now, concentrating on staying in step with Me. When our path leads to a cliff, be willing to climb it with My help. When we come to a resting place, take time to be refreshed in My Presence. Enjoy the rhythm of life lived close to Me. You already know the ultimate destination of your journey: your entrance into heaven. So keep your focus on the path just before you, leaving outcomes up to Me."

These words allow me to get out of bed each morning, to keep on keeping on, and to do so with a smile on my face, thankfulness in my heart, appreciation for life and devotion to God.

Again, I don't know that this monologue has any cohesive thread connecting one thought to the next. I only know I keep going because I believe. Which brings me to the second meditation. These 3 simple sentences:

I believe in the sun

When it does not shine.

I believe in love

When I am alone.

I believe in God

When he is silent.

And so now it is November 8. When I began this reflection on October 26 my intention was to make it a 2-phase narrative, the first prior to the presidential election, the second post-election day. And it is near impossible to make this non-political, given the elephant looming ever so large virtually everywhere. But as I look back at the past 2 weeks I have experienced a tsunami of emotions, thoughts, realizations and yes, thanksgivings. But I think these can and should be summarized with brevity. In the words of "Black Voters Matter" co-founder LaTosha Brown "*we must stop the pain before healing can begin*". It feels like today, November 8, I've taken in the best air I've ever breathed after the worst fall I've ever had. I feel like the pain has stopped. I believe Alyssa does too.

Let's begin to heal.