

This morning was a study in contrasts. As has been my tradition for many years, I woke up early, turned on the coffee pot and sat down with the Sunday New York Times. Honestly, newspaper headlines have rarely been harbingers of good news, but right now they seem even more disturbing than usual. Three headlines at the “top of the fold” on page one, grabbed my attention in a not-so-good way. Two had to do with the mounting Covid-19 death toll while the third asserted that many in our country are so divided over this year’s elections, accusing one another of democracy theft, that healing is no longer an option.

Then worship happened and hope emerged. I realize that worshiping online, whether pre-recorded or by Zoom, is not the same as gathering together in person and that these worship options are far from ideal. Though I have come to cherish the gift of listening to Sunday’s recorded worship services periodically throughout the week, the power of the gathered, in-the-flesh community cannot be denied. There is an energy that is passed among us when we share the peace, commune beside each other, and carry on in lively conversations around the coffee urn at Fellowship. I miss that, and I suspect you do too.

Back to the part about hope being found in worship this morning. In the text of a hymn from our pre-recorded worship service, I discovered a glimmer of light

*“Lord of light, your name outshining all the stars and suns of space,
use our talents in your kingdom as the servants of your grace...
by the prayers of faithful watchers, never silent day or night,
by the cross of Jesus bringing peace to all and healing light.
By the love that passes knowledge making all your children one.” (ELW #688).*

In just a few stanzas powerful images emerged. “Servants,” “prayers,” “love,” “peace,” “making all your children one.” Then as if that were not enough, words of the Post Communion Prayer from our Zoom Communion service piled on, revealing to me what it looks like to follow the “Lord of Light.”

*“Lead us from this place, nourished and forgiven, into your beloved vineyard to wipe
away the tears of all who hunger and thirst.”*

In the face of this morning’s newspaper articles revealing the tragedies of Covid illness and grudges held, God reached into my despair reminding me that despite the hunger and thirst abounding in our world, a piece of bread and a sip of wine wrapped in Christ’s love equips me to embody hope; to repair the breach; to stop the spread of hate.

Regardless of how “right” I believe my cause to be, all is superseded by God’s call to love, peace, and healing. In God’s beloved community, made possible through the servant love of Christ on the cross, there is no room for hate; there is no room for holding grudges. Though we can and must hold one another accountable for our actions, and disagreements are a part of our communal life, vengeance and hatred are never options.

This morning's virtual worship services transformed the horizon of my vision. Though I am still profoundly troubled by the dynamics of division rampant in our world, I will not succumb to them. I will not buy into the name calling and the dehumanizing of those with whom I disagree. I will however continue to call out injustices, whether acute or systemic and I will do so in peace in love and in hope. As a follower of the Prince of Peace and the King of Love, how can I do any less?

Peace, love, and emerging hope,
Pastor Doug