

...when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy.

Job 38:7

What I Do Not Understand



Surely, last week's presidential election will be analyzed for many years, so I hesitate to attempt to give a response. Some may even question whether it is appropriate for religious leaders to comment on political events. Yet we of the Reformed tradition, perhaps more than any other Protestant Christian tradition, recognize our location as followers of Christ first, yet living and acting in the world. Karl Barth once said,

The Pastor and the Faithful should not deceive themselves into thinking that they are a religious society, which has to do with certain themes; they live in the world. We still need—according to my old formulation—the Bible and the Newspaper.

So what are we to make of this election?

If I had to make a few observations, my first is to repeat what we all live by, that God is sovereign, and we sin when we fall into the trap of thinking we know the right answer, or who should or will likely be our future leaders. I love the Bible verse I reference today for the sheer beauty of the image, evoking a moment when even the heavens, in their magnificence, praise God. The phrase becomes even more evocative when one realizes that it is given in the midst of God's long tirade asserting God's absolute power, raging against even the thought that a mere mortal like Job could question God's judgment—and let's face it, if there were any human who had reason to question God, it would be Job.

While this election has revealed the quiet classism that leave people feeling ignored or dismissed by the "elites," we are also painfully aware of millions of others who are left feeling unsafe by the results of this election. There are so many groups who were vilified in this election, and while it appears that many voters did not understand the threat level of this rhetoric, the reality is now apparent for all to see.



I wrote these words in my column from November 14, 2016. I only found it because I wanted to reference this image from Job, and I don't like to repeat verses. Apparently this was the only time I used it until today. What do they say about things staying the same?

I still don't know what to say. I still think we need to be careful about being so sure we know God's mind—as Job confessed after God's four-chapter tongue-lashing: "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." (Job 42:3b) In fact, because the election results were so strong this year, I have to wonder what needs to be learned about folks on the other side of the electorate. There are so many things to wonder about, and even more to fear. In 2016 I worried about those who were vulnerable, naming undocumented immigrants and Muslims. This year, I am even more worried about undocumented migrants, but I am also saddened that the US will likely renege on our commitments to Ukraine, and to the Paris climate accords, and whatever limited attempts we made to contain the violence in the Middle East and bring humanitarian aid to Gaza. And I'm aware of the deep pain felt by our queer and especially transgender friends, and all who were made to be targets of fear and hatred in the runup to the election.

As it happens, the Education, Equipping and Empowerment Committee, who are responsible for worship in our Presbytery meetings, had already planned for a service of lament at this Saturday's meeting, without thinking about the election. They were aware of the growing violence in the Middle East, the ravages of Hurricane Helene, and continuing concerns for Ukraine, and knowing that the coming holiday season can be difficult for folks who have lost loved ones, it seemed like the right time to acknowledge our vulnerability and grief, pray with each other, and be fed at the Lord's table.

While there are reasons to grieve, there are also reasons to give thanks. We have some promising things to consider this Saturday, and an opportunity to do some good old-fashioned holiday shopping, and bring toys and blankets and towels for families less fortunate than we are.

More than ever, we who are aware of God's many blessings are called to follow Jesus in caring for the most vulnerable. As one of our pastors said a week ago, regardless of how the election would go, there will be work to do. There are people to love. There is Christ's gift of hope that we can share with those who are most hurting. May we do so.

Looking forward to being together as Christ's family,

Wendy