

No Future Without Forgiveness

With the announcement that Joe Biden has enough electoral votes to be the President-Elect, some are joyous, and some are dejected. Some are laughing and some are weeping. All the emotions and reactions we feel are to be honored. Here's the thing: our work as followers of Jesus hasn't changed. Remember the promises in our Baptismal Covenant?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as yourself?

Yes, the configuration of our government matters because it has enormous ramifications. However, when we are baptized, we gain agency. We become Christ bearers and our task is to align ourselves with God so that we are available to be God's instruments to bring God's realm of justice, peace, and mercy near. I realized that since Election Day, I have not been present to the actual world around me. My focus is on what might happen instead of what actually is happening.

In *Walden*, Thoreau writes, "I have never met [a person] who was fully alive. How could I look [that person] in the face?" My hope is that I and all faithful people will wake from our preoccupation and distraction of the election and attend to the hopes, and joys, and hurts of the world right around us. "Today is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." In other words, this is the only day we have, so let us be fully incarnated here and now and do the work God gives us to do wherever we are.

If we are to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," then we must let go of our preoccupation with what happened or didn't happen and embrace the world around us. A spiritual teacher when listening to one of his/her students go on and on about mystical theology would finally ask the person, "Yes, but where are your feet?" In other words, "Are you grounded in the here and now?" It's not enough to be wise about the universe if you are unkind or simply a jerk to your neighbors.

Perhaps it's time for us to attend to the events and people in front of us. Perhaps it's time to focus on this moment which is the only moment we have instead of what people should have done in the past or ought to do in the future. The present moment is the only place reconciliation happens.

There's a reason Desmond Tutu entitled his book about the struggle over South Africa's apartheid *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Until we find a way to reconcile, we will simply transfer the current division and acrimony to another subject. The doorway to forgiveness is to let go of a desired future and stop defining others by one act or one aspect of their lives.

Some time ago, I read an account of the 50th Anniversary of Gettysburg in 1913. The surviving soldiers from both sides dressed in their uniforms for a re-enactment of Pickett's Charge. The Union soldiers took their places on Seminary Ridge, and the Confederate soldiers stood on the farmland below. Instead of rifles and bayonets, they had canes and crutches. When the two armies approached one another, the Confederate army let out a rebel yell. However, instead of shooting or stabbing, they embraced. They put the past to rest -- they forgave -- and they stepped into new life.

Let us not wait fifty years or fifty days for the healing to start. Reconciliation is our calling; it's what we promised in baptism and it's time for us to embrace our calling.

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