

Scriptures:

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Luke 23:33-43

We Were Made For These Times

As I read the scriptures for Reign of Christ Sunday I could not help but notice how completely different the “king” we celebrate today in church is from the leaders being elected and held up around the world. Not only was Jesus “the king” crucified but he also forgave and lifted up those struggling next to him. In fact he grants salvation to the sinner on the cross and welcomes him into Paradise rather than mocking or condemning him. This is not a leader that would be found today, well at least not as an elected official. And there is the point. Jesus wasn’t an elected, a political king - in fact he was speaking against the very thing I believe we are called to speak against today.

I don’t think we can be so arrogant and elitist to think that we as Christians or the church do not fall quickly into following the leaders of our day. With Caroline Lewis I have to wonder “To what extent has the church contributed to the latent misogyny that raised its ugly head ... To what extent has the church allowed racism by pretending that whitelash could not possibly exist? The truth is the church plays it safe for the sake of numbers, budgets, members, and power. The truth is the church has remained silent about the truth of the Gospel -- the truth of the Gospel that tells the truth of God’s love for all people -- which is at the very heart of Luke’s Gospel”¹

I honestly believe it is time for churches and Christians that believe in another way to speak this is not time for silence. I am tired of reading commentaries with comments like “that’s why I hate Christians, The Christians did this, I am not a Christian for this exact reason” all quotes from an article I read regarding the election of Trump.

“Evil settles into everyday life when people are unable or unwilling to recognize it. It makes its home among us when we are keen to minimize it or describe it as something else.” If anything is able to call out evil, it is the church.”² You might all have to buckle up in the next while because I am done with having Christianity labelled this way. This is not the Jesus I know, follow and believe in. Lewis writes “To think that our rhetoric can’t make a difference is to let the rhetoric of hate have the dominant voice. To think that what we say can’t work its way into the mainstream religious conversation is to say that we don’t have much confidence in the power of the Gospel. To think that the church needs to remain neutral so as not to offend is to forget that the very news of the empty tomb was thought to be a load of crap (Luke 24:11).” (Just ask the women who told people the stone had been rolled away)

¹ <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4754>

² <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4754>

Let me say clearly. That the God and Christianity that is being lifted up is not the God of my faith. I personally do not like speaking against the other and yet at this time I want some things to be clear. My faith does not support the rejection of refugees and immigrants, it holds up and sees the value of every human being rather than condemns or insults peoples worth. I actually believe that women have just as much skill and wisdom as men and have to ability to lead in church, in corporation and in the world. I honestly believe that God sees the value, worth and equality of all people, yes even my LGBTQ family and friends and it is time we stop judging people who are not like us. I truly believe “We can no longer allow the power of one slice of Christianity speak for us all.” *“We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in..oppression and denial of the humanity of others and their right to exist.”*³

I don’t want to sound arrogant - let me be clear that I know I am very capable of messing up in my faith and in my life, but at the same time I believe that I am called to speak against injustice when it is so blatantly rearing its ugly head. And I know “There are many voices counseling, “let’s wait and see how he does”; “he’s the president-elect of the United States, we have to respect the people’s choice”; “let’s just pray and live in love and everything will work out”. *For today* Mine is not one of those voices. And some 1500 years ago neither was Jeremiah’s. “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!’, says the Lord.’ ...you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings’, says the Lord.” (Jer 23:1-6) “Woe’ in this case is not an expression of lament, but a prophetic tirade.⁴

“For one thing, we know that Donald Trump and his cronies are not the source of the crisis they are the symptoms. In the States, in Great Britain, France and other stable democracies we are seeing the same frightening dynamic – populations unsettled by the economic impact of globalization and climate change and shifting demographics that come from immigration are rising up and pushing back. They/we want things to go back to where they were.” Before we had to face ‘the other’ every single day.” Debra Bowman wrote and will be preaching this morning “Trump engaged in the most cynical use of scapegoating – just get rid of the Muslims, the Mexicans, the gays and lesbians, unions, national trade deals, actually just get rid of anything that is different from what we remember as the good old days, and everything will be OK. He and the radio and tv commentators and trolls of Facebook and the internet made it seem OK to say the things that lurk in the darkest parts of our minds and hearts. To say them out loud and with conviction rather than noticing when they might flit through our thoughts like a bat in the night, gone before we can come to terms with our own racism and other isms, gone before we even need to remind ourselves to not say out loud what dark thoughts might on occasion pop in to our heads. Go ahead and shout those hateful things from the roof tops, say the new people in power.

³ <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4754>

⁴ Bowman Debra “A Rant Trumped by Justice”

Somehow the right to free speech has given rise to a conviction that everyone has a right to their own opinion. Actually, no they/we don't. Everyone doesn't have the right to treat women as objects, to spit at people of colour, to rip the hijabs off girls in the street, to paint swastikas on churches and synagogues. No, everyone doesn't have a right to hateful opinions that give rise to violence. And just in case you think this a problem somewhere else – a swastika and the word 'kike' were painted on a woman rabbi's house in Ottawa. A swastika and a ultra right slogan were painted on Parkhurst United Church. 'Hey white people' posters were taped to trees in Ottawa. Richmond Mounties are investigating after extremist flyers were dropped through the mail slots of some homes in Steveston. The flyers are directed against Chinese people, have a xenophobic slogan and encourage recipients to "join the alt-right" and "save Richmond."⁵

Perhaps we're at that pivotal moment. A moment when the people need to decide what makes us a great people, and who will be the king who leads us. "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up...a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ...Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety." (Jer 23: 5-6)

And now that I have ranted I want to quote an article I read this week by Clarissa Pinkola Estes she said the words I was trying to say last week and again today because I don't think this is a time to give up, in fact I believe We were created just for times like these. Pinkola Estes writes:

"My friends, do not lose heart. We were made for these times. I have heard from so many recently who are deeply and properly bewildered. They are concerned about the state of affairs in our world now. Ours is a time of almost daily astonishment and often righteous rage over the latest degradations of what matters most to civilized, visionary people.

You are right in your assessments ... Yet, I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is that we were made for these times...

For years I have been preaching we have to be counter cultural as people of faith. If ever there was a time that this was clear, it is now. Now being a boater I loved this next part of what Pinkola Estes writes - she says

I grew up on the Great Lakes and recognize a seaworthy vessel when I see one. Regarding awakened souls, there have never been more able vessels in the waters than there are right now across the world. And they are fully provisioned and able to signal one another as never before in the history of humankind.

Look out over the prow; there are millions of boats of righteous souls on the waters with you. Even though your veneers may shiver from every wave in this stormy roil, I assure you that the

⁵ IBID

long timbers composing your prow and rudder come from a greater forest. That long-grained lumber is known to withstand storms, to hold together, to hold its own, and to advance, regardless.

In any dark time, there is a tendency to veer toward fainting over how much is wrong or unattended in the world. Do not focus on that. There is a tendency, too, to fall into being weakened by dwelling on what is outside your reach, by what cannot yet be. Do not focus there. That is spending the wind without raising the sails.

We are needed, that is all we can know. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us and guide us, and we will know them when they appear. Didn't you say you were a believer? Didn't you say you pledged to listen to a voice greater? Didn't you ask for grace? Don't you remember that to be in grace means to submit to the voice greater?

Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good.

What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take everyone on Earth to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.

One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these - to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity.

Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. If you would help to calm the tumult, this is one of the strongest things you can do. There will always be times when you feel discouraged. I too have felt despair many times in my life, but I do not keep a chair for it. I will not entertain it. It is not allowed to eat from my plate.... The good words we say and the good deeds we do are not ours. They are the words and deeds of the One who brought us here.”⁶

Today we are called to be the light of Christ. The desperately needed ray of light that shines as a glimmer of hope for all and especially now.

⁶ By Clarissa Pinkola Estes American poet, post-trauma specialist and Jungian psychoanalyst, author of *Women Who Run With the Wolves*.

Amen.