

On the Eve of the 2020 Election

Well we are now just some few days away from the polls closing across our country and the election season ending. For those of you who have not voted, I offer you this wisdom...which is not different that what you would hear from me any Sunday, lean into the light. For me, it is not about Democrats or Republicans or conservatives or liberals. No side, no faction holds the moral high ground. No political party ever gets it completely right. Politics is always a choice between imperfect parties and candidates.

I believe instead that as a people of faith, we are taught and called to love our neighbor. You've heard me say this so many times. This is my deepest belief, my central understanding of who God calls us to be. We are called to actions that look out for the interests of our neighbor more than our own. We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in our world. We are called to recall that the ministry of Jesus and the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures call us to bring good news to the poor, heal the broken, release the captive, welcome the stranger, learn from the other, feed the hungry and care for the least of us.

I think that is what matters to God's heart. What that means on a ballot or in an election, that I trust you each will discern a path forward into choosing. You get to choose what that means, making decisions based on facts that best serve your fellow citizens and align with that which matters to God's heart.

That is the extent of what I feel called to say about voting and this election. I'd like to instead talk today about what comes next for our country and for each other. It is no secret that we are in divisive times. Regardless of the outcome of any number of the races this week, there will be winners and losers. There will be continued painful fractures and divisiveness. There will be fragmented relationships abounding.

Tom Ranken recommended a great book to me this summer that I read called [The Big Sort: why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing us Apart](#). This book talks about how as a country we have become geographically segregated by political party since the mid-70s. The author doesn't blame this segregation on any politician or political party or the media. Instead, he shows with data how the polarization that we now have is more due to our own participation in like-minded groups and living situations. I found that message challenging but also quite hopeful it seems to potentially point to a solution that we can each be a part of.

And that solution goes back to those core teachings that ground our spirituality and our faith. We are called to love our neighbor. And that doesn't always mean the neighbor that looks like us, votes like us, protests like us, cares about what we care about. We are called to love our neighbor. Probably especially the neighbor who is different from us.

That doesn't mean that our differences that initially caused any divisiveness to go away. Instead regardless of those differences, as a people of faith, we are called to be something different in this world, be community, where all matter, all belong, and all are needed. We are called to find a way forward in our relationships in a manner that is just. We are called as people of God to be something different in this world, to be community. We are called to love our neighbor.

That means something hard. It means that as a people of faith, we are called to a higher standard of engagement and interaction with our neighbors, our families and our communities, even those with whom we may disagree on an issue. That may mean that we choose respect and hope over animosity and bitterness. That may mean we choose to listen and learn rather than attack and insult. That may mean we strive to have civic discussions in civil tones. That may mean we choose to be community, that we choose to love our neighbor.

And I just want to be clear that loving our neighbor does not mean that that we excuse harm or allow it to go unchecked. It doesn't mean that we ignore systems of power and oppression and harm that has been done to marginalized communities. It means that we try to find a way forward into love with eyes wide open, hearts wide open, choosing to stand for a world where all matter, all belong, and all are needed.

Our scripture reading today is from the Book of Revelations, and it is some of the last words of the Bible. For those of you not familiar with the Book of Revelations, it isn't a book per se but a letter that was sent to seven different churches decades after Christ died. And that letter is telling the story of a vision of God's presence for a fractured and frightened community that had no idea what the future would hold.

Apocalypse means unveiling or revealing. So how does the book end? How does the Bible end? What is revealed? It is the vision that we heard in our scripture reading today. It does not end as many believe with a rapture of the holy and the earth abandoned and left to rot. None of that is in the Book of Revelations. That is not what is revealed. Instead what is revealed is a vision of God's dream for this world.

The Bible ends, the Book of Revelations ends with a vision of God coming to dwell among God's people. The bible ends with the image of God consoling God's people, of God ending pain and suffering. The book ends with the revelation that God dreams of reuniting wholly with God's people here in this world and creating a new Jerusalem where **all** are healed, and **all** are welcomed, and **all** are comforted. **All** are called home to God's dwelling place. That is how the Bible ends. With the dream that we **all** belong to each other and to God, the Alpha and Omega, our beginning and our end. The Bible ends with **all** being called home to each other and to our God.

It is a beautiful ending, a beautiful dream. As this week progresses, I ask that each of you hold onto that dream, hold onto that ending. Regardless of what may come, remember that God dreams of a future where God dwells among us, calling us all beloved, calling us all home, welcoming all, comforting all. That is how this story ends. And to quote one of my favorite movies, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 'Everything will be all right in the end and if it's not all right, then it's not yet the end.'

At the end, we dwell with God, we all dwell with God.

I want to close today with a poem by Judy Chicago that reads to me like a lovely prayer for our nation and for all of us as we walk into the coming week.

And then all that has divided us will merge
And then compassion will be wedded to power
And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
And then both men and women will be gentle
And then both women and men will be strong
And then no person will be subject to another's will
And then all will be rich and free and varied
And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
And then all will nourish the young
And then all will cherish life's creatures
And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
And then everywhere will be called Eden once again.

Let it be so, let it be so!

Amen