

“WOLF, LAMB, LION, OX”

Isaiah 65:17-25

Luke 21:5-19

© by the Rev. Ms Laurie A. McNeill

Highland and Marlboro, New York

November 13, 2016

(Isaiah6525)

The world is not coming to an end! It may feel that way for millions of Americans, but the sun continues to rise and set after Mr. Donald Trump captured the votes needed for the Electoral College to elect him as the 45th President. The popular vote went to Secretary Hillary Clinton. The close result presses our nation to live into its name: the *United* States of America.

A student from Manhattan College reminded us of the need for unity when she was interviewed on CBS World News Tonight. Kaitlyn Greiner was celebrating after the election when she said, “The silent majority spoke during this election and the American people chose their president and they chose Trump and I think that we need to focus on unifying the country now and moving forward.”

Kaitlyn is a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Marlboro! Kaitlyn shares the exuberance of 60,328,203 Americans. Those who are victorious have hope that the new president will provide a fresh approach to redress the issues of joblessness, poverty, and the widening gap between rich and poor. Those who are victorious are hopeful that the established political elite will be dumped and real change will be inaugurated. Those who are victorious are eager to have a president who will make America great again.

Alas, there are 60,966,953 Americans who feel differently. Many of those who are defeated share First Lady Michelle Obama’s claim that America has never been better. The First Family has embodied our gains as a nation. African-American slaves built the White House that the Obama family called home for eight years.

The racial barrier that was surmounted eight years ago made a promising statement about who *we the people* are. We demonstrated that we would not let race disqualify a person from serving in the highest office of the land.

Another four years will pass before we declare whether gender will continue to be an impediment. Even though the popular vote was for Hillary Clinton to be our President, the geographic distribution of those votes were insufficient for her to become our Commander-in-Chief.

Many women who voted for Hillary Clinton experience her defeat as a continuation of the limitations of gender.

Women were only given the right to vote less than a hundred years ago, in 1920. Many of the women who now vote graduated from colleges where their mothers were not allowed to matriculate — their schools used to be all-male institutions. Women in the workforce continue to earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. Less than 5% of women are CEO’s of Fortune 500 companies.

Given the gender dynamics of our nation, it is astonishing that Hillary Rodham Clinton won the popular vote.

There is profound sadness that we have mothers who will not live to see a female President.

The Book of Genesis in the Bible tells us that God created humankind in God's image — female and male God created them. In America, presidents reflect only the male image.

This election was about more than gender; it also was about the direction of our nation.

Many of the those who voted for Donald Trump are enthusiast that Governor Mike Pence will be our Vice-President. They hope he will do for our nation what he did for the state of Indiana.

As Governor, Mr. Pence advocated for and signed into law the strictest abortion law in the country. Indiana House Bill 1337, approved in March of this year, requires a woman who has an abortion to provide a funeral for the fetus.

In 2015, Pence signed into law a bill that allowed businesses to discriminate against persons because of their sexual orientation. Of the Indiana Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Pence said, "Many people of faith feel their religious liberty is under attack by government action." That bill was rewritten after realizing the state would lose money if they preserved the law.

Christian Evangelicals are hopeful that compromises are a thing of the past. The alignment of the Supreme Court, Congress and the Executive Branch provides an opportunity for our nation to become a Christian theocracy — where God's law is the law of the land.

Religion was a campaign issue. Mr. Trump has promised to require all Muslims to register in a database.

Not all who voted for the Trump-Pence ticket are in favor of the Evangelical agenda. They continue to believe in the separation of church and state.

Many are horrified that the Ku Klux Klan enthusiastically endorsed the president-elect.

Millions of Trump voters simply want change. For them, the American Dream has become a thing of the past and there is a desire to have hope restored.

It is understandable is that we would have a change in leadership from one party to another. It seems fair that Republicans have a time in the Oval Office after eight years of occupancy by a Democrat. Maybe we should eliminate elections and just take turns.

Lani Guinier made such a suggestion in a different context. Ms. Guinier, you may recall, was nominated to be the Assistant Attorney General by President Bill Clinton, but she was never confirmed. Her ideas were considered to be too radical.

Guinier suggested changing the way we vote by creating race conscious voter districts that would yield fair representation. Her voting model is too complicated to describe here, but the inspiration for it was the way children play games — they take turns.

Lani Guinier says that children have an innate sense of fairness. A group of kids get together and say, "What are we going to play today?" The majority might decide to play kickball, even though several kids really want to play dodgeball. After playing kickball for a while, the children decide to do something else. They change games. Dodgeball it is. Everyone is happy. Everyone is heard. Every wish is honored. Every one gets their turn.

Donald Trump voters were unhappy. No one was listening to them. Their needs were not met. Now it is their turn.

The conflicted mood of the nation reflects what is different between Lani Guinier's insights and this moment. *This is no game!*

Had the rhetoric of the campaign been different, we could surmise that the Republican reclamation of the Executive Branch is nothing more than a shift of power from one party to another. Harsh words on the campaign trail do not allow the luxury that assessment. We have been promised that the new administration will not continue business as usual.

The promised agenda is extreme. It goes beyond restoring factory jobs in Michigan and Ohio.

There is deep distress as to whether promises made will be promises kept. The vulnerable in our nation are frightened. We have men and women and boys and girls who fear being deported, arrested, killed, disenfranchised, attacked, vilified, humiliated.

Like lambs with a wolf on their range, like an ox with a lion on the prowl, there are those in our midst who are vulnerable to laws and court decisions that will directly impact their lives.

We soon may have the *criminalization of identity*. We cannot change who we are. If laws are passed against one's existence, what will the punishment be for the crime?

The vulnerability did not arise this week with the election of Donald Trump and Mike Pence, even though it is now felt more keenly. Vulnerability existed before the Republicans reclaimed the White House, and vulnerability will continue when the office is eventually won back by the Democrats.

Such is the nature of our diversity. One has power over another. The One will decide if the Other will suffer. The One will decide if the Other will thrive.

Power dynamics course throughout history, including Jesus' day. There is a moment when Jesus looks at the grand Temple in Jerusalem and tells his listeners that, in their lifetime, it will fall. Fifty years after the Resurrection, the Temple is destroyed.

Jesus understands the anxiety of being on the precipice of potential doom.

Jesus tells us that we will fight with one another. We will suffer natural disasters, scarcity of food, and epidemics. There will be arrests because of beliefs. Families will be divided. Some will be executed.

Jesus goes on to tell us how to live in such times. Jesus reminds us to claim God's authority in our lives. We are to live as citizens of heaven.

We gain our lives through God, not through American citizenship, employment, financial well-being, health, race, gender, or sexual orientation.

We are citizens of heaven!

Our responsibility as citizens of heaven is to bear witness to justice, kindness, humility and love. Even though misery will unfold before our eyes, we are to focus on our discipleship. God's agenda — God's platform — is justice, kindness, humility and love. This is not a future calling. This is immediate. Here. Now.

The structures before us will fall — as did the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century — but that is beyond our control. What is within our means is claiming who we are in this moment. Jesus encourages us and promises that “by holding fast, you will gain your lives.” (Luke 21:19)

We are to have faith that the turmoil of this time is not an apocalyptic moment. The upheaval in Jesus' day did not result in the world coming to an end. The heightened emotions and actions we take in our nation will not bring the world to an end. We are not that powerful.

The prophet Isaiah suggests that whatever power we do have is best kept in check. Harmonious living may be had when the powerful set aside their threats. Peace is procured when the vulnerable are made safe.

Isaiah says this is the realm of God in which we may live.

Wolf and lamb will graze together,

and the lion will eat straw like the ox. (Isaiah 65:25)

Let us go forth as those who yearn for a new heaven and a new earth.

Amen.