

Not an Option

There is a fable about the Angel Gabriel who has just come from surveying the earth and its inhabitants when he reports to God. "Lord, it's my duty to inform you that you're the possessor of a choice piece of real estate known as planet earth.

But the tenants you've leased it out to are destroying it. In another few years, it won't be fit to live in. They have polluted your rivers. The air is fouled with the stench of their over-consumerism. They frequently kill one another, and all the prophets you've sent to them calling for an accounting have met with violence. By any rule of sound management, Lord, you've got but one option."

Then raising his trumpet to his lips, Gabriel asked, "Shall I sound the eviction notice now, sir?"

And God said, "No, Gabriell!

This fable strikes a cord, a deep cord, in the midst of this time, this season, this society, this country. It stirs profound questions on this day, World Communion Sunday, when Christian congregations world wide, across national and denominational barriers break the bread and share the cup in unity.

The day has taken on new relevancy and depth of meaning in a world where globalization often has undermined peace and justice – and in a time when fear divides the peoples of God's earth. On this day we celebrate our oneness in Christ, the Prince of Peace, in the midst of the world we are called to serve – a world ever more in need of peacemaking.

Yet on this day, **our** country is in turmoil, if not crisis. In our minds we know there are those globally much worse off than we, yet today we feel strongly feel..... well, what we feel may vary. I feel frustration, confusion, irritation ... (allow others to name their feelings).

On this day, we are facing a national election, and being bombarded with images, sound bites, fears, future doom ... campaign ads. For many it all seems way beyond our abilities to comprehend, much less figure out. Faith and faithful living seem totally divorced from our political landscape.

Today's worship prep thought echos some conversations I have had, with those who love God and wish to live Christian, caring lives. I also had a conversation with one which began with the statement, "we must pray for God's will to be done in this election". Amen! Then the one who had made this statement continued "that is why it is a sin to vote, voting shows we don't trust God to bring about God's will." Now, as always, I could be wrong, but I can't go "there", I can't feel that the call of faith in regards to this election, to politics or social issues or any of the other "messy areas" of life is to opt out.

Not is it an option to give into fears, real, imaginary, or fabricated. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are to test everything. We are to hold fast. We are to utilize our minds and ability to understand while also placing our ultimate trust in the unknowable God. We are to deny ourselves and be guided by a deep desire for the common good, for God's kingdom to come on earth.

Not is to only cast a vote an option. We are called to be "thus says the Lord" heralds, dare I say prophets!

Our country is in an economic mess, and regardless of who is elected in November, this mess will not go away until some a fundamental shift happen, as Kay has shared with us so clearly from our Annual Conference experience, shift happens. This shift may be embraced and encouraged by our political systems, or it may no. This shift is the shift from being a greed based society. This shift will not happened on a grand and national level, it will only come into being as individuals embrace it in their lives, and involve themselves in our political systems so that they can call for, demand, that this shift happen in the political and economic arenas.

As you prepare to gather on this day, I urge you to come before God prayerfully considering your, and our, own greediness. I urge you to ask for the Spirit's empowerment that you, that we, may use our right to vote, not for our own sake, but for Christ's sake. I pray you will commit to look deeply, and then to ask for God's wisdom to bring you to a deeper understanding, a deeper desire to be about the work of Christ in the world today.

I don't expect there will be an easy, quick or painless answer to the mess we are in the midst of, that is why I am so grateful that Jesus invites us to the table to find hope and strength in the middle of the mess. I give thanks that Jesus reminds us that we are to help ensure that all are not only welcomed but provided for at Christ's table and in God's world. Opting out is not an option. Vote, hoping your vote will lead to this world, and yes, our lives being turned upside down, being turned over to God.