

We woke up last Wednesday morning in uncharted waters, didn't we? Getting there took us through the most mean-spirited election process that I can remember. The rhetoric stressed emotional fault lines that finally gave way leaving us deeply divided as though an earthquake had opened a vast chasm. On one side, people are elated and on the other people are horrified.

By Wednesday evening, thousands of protestors filled downtown Seattle and cities from Boston to Detroit to Las Angeles, complete with burning effigies of the President-elect. As these protests continued to mount, the Ku Klux Klan announced a parade in honor of the President-elect and hate crimes against Muslim Americans, blacks, Latinos and Jews spiked. All this took place despite Trump, President Obama and Secretary Clinton all speaking to the need for unity and reconciliation.

Wednesday's Seattle Times published an editorial by Thomas Friedman in which he quoted Harvard Business professor Gautam Mukunda who said that "we will not have effective leadership until we once again have followers who can be lead. And all of that starts with trust."¹ Friedman also quoted Ron Heifetz, from Harvard's J.F.K. School of Government. Heifetz referred to the "deficits of trust among ourselves and the deficits of trust in authority" as "the central challenge revealed by this election."

But, having spent some time learning from Professor Heifetz, I know that Friedman left out one key component that Heifetz would insist that we consider. We will be disappointed if we expect Donald Trump to rebuild trust, and I'm not simply referring to his disgraceful behavior. The hard reality of the uncharted waters we find ourselves in is this: the central challenge of trust-building is ours to do—yours and mine. Regardless of whether you are pleased with the outcome of the election or disturbed, you and I have work to do. It is our work to do because we have to live with the results.

But as daunting as that may sound, it is truly good news because trust—*faith*—is exactly what we have to offer the world, and God gives faith in abundance. We are a school for learning how to trust in God and to trust God's presence in each other. Just last week, we renewed our baptismal vows to respect the dignity of every human being. *There's no better opening position* for creating or rebuilding trust with the people around us. And we gather once again this week with our hearts, minds and souls open to God trusting that Christ will meet us with a good word in our Gospel.

¹ Friedman, T. (2016, November 9). *We're near the breaking point*. The Seattle Times, p. A25.

It may come as no surprise to some of you that there are essentially two approaches to short apocalyptic texts like this one from Luke. One approach begins with the sounding of an alarm that sends us scurrying for cover and preparing for a horrifically bloody end in which we must behave by the rules and decode earthly events so that we can know what to expect and when to expect the end of days. That approach stimulates our emotions, especially our fears, and it is a well-traveled path. Luke's Gospel was written at about the same time as the catastrophic Jewish revolt against the Romans—a battle that the Essene branch of Judaism was sure was the final conflict before the coming of the Messiah.

About 300 years later, Christians began reading “dreadful portents and great signs from heaven” as evidence of a specific end of time, and there have been so many of these kinds of predictions that the word “apocalypse” in popular usage has come to mean a great sudden disaster that causes great fear and destruction. There are plenty of churches still promoting that version, invariably blaming someone else for stimulating God's rage.

But then there's a second approach that is just as old as the first and just as well-traveled. The second approach still involves “apocalypse,” but in the original sense of the Greek word that simply means “unveiling.” This is the approach that the Episcopal Church and many others teach. We choose this approach for several reasons, but they require that we quiet our emotional responses. That's why we begin with the gorgeous vision and canticle from Isaiah before Luke's Gospel.

And then we use the miraculous cerebral cortex that God gave us to ponder—to think about why Luke's Jesus warns us not to be led astray by people claiming to know when and why the season of the end will begin. With the next breath, Jesus warns us not to be dismayed when we hear of “wars and insurrection.” But the Greek actually reads: “polemics and disorder.”

That is to say, when people are hurling verbal or written attacks at each other and creating instability (does any of that sound familiar?) when you hear people attacking each other verbally and creating instability, *don't be distracted*. There is a better option, which is to watch for God's rejoicing; to live in the present by faith and hope, trusting in God without fear even in the face of suffering and upheaval.

Luke's Jesus was speaking to a specific first-century community about the fall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, which is portrayed on the cover of your bulletin this morning. He offered words of comfort and reassurance at a time of tremendous loss and uncertainty. But his words were not a universal prediction for all times. That being said, nations *have* come and gone, and governments *have* risen out of governments that have fallen, and natural disasters have

disabled human structures. And that will continue to be true and that will continue to distract.

But the larger point is that there is only so much that our human structures can do for us. We are never more vulnerable than when we place too much trust in our political systems. Even our religious institutions let us down when they themselves become the primary focus, instead of being beacons into the mystery.

We are in uncharted waters that seem to be characterized by cynicism, blame, rage and fear. We can choose to fix our position, preparing our defense in advance, but that adds only divisiveness and pain.

Or there is an alternate path, if we will take it—one that Luke's Jesus has named as the work we have been given to do. This moment of polemics and disorder has turned, for us, into an opportunity to testify. We can respond to the rising despair most faithfully by seizing this fragile moment to share our trust in the love of Christ.

Instead of looking to the White House, we can turn to Christ and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Instead of looking to the institutional temple, we can turn to Christ and allow *ourselves* to be changed. Instead of putting our hearts and minds to the creation of a defense, we can open our hearts to Christ who will pour love, voice and wisdom directly into us.

On the day of the election, the Rev. Kathy Monson-Lutes held a day-long prayer vigil. She is the priest-in-charge of Trinity Episcopal Church in Janesville, Wisconsin, a union town in the rust belt and Paul Ryan's hometown. She never pressed her parish to vote for one candidate or another, but when the polls opened, so did the doors of the church. And people came to pray or sit in silence. "People are afraid," she said, "because they've been told to be afraid. I think the reason I was moved to do this had to do with helping people to place their fear in a place of hope."²

That's what a church can do in a way that no other human organization can. The mission of this church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. We are uniquely positioned to offer people a place of hope to place their fear and pain, to experience God's love and to hear God's promise of justice and mercy. It's good to feed and clothe people, and we are doing some of that. But we can give something else to the world that foodbanks and shelters cannot. We can offer sacred space.

In the celebration of the Mass, the liturgy is work done by and for the children of God. Christ is present as people gather in the narthex and move into the nave. Whoever shows up enters into the mystery as Christ is revealed in the

² Confessore, N. and Nick Corasaniti (2016, November 9). *Anger and Suspicion Dominate as a Divided Nation Floods the Polls*. New York Times, p. P4.

Word proclaimed in the midst of the gathered Body. At this table, the boundaries between Christ and our human selves dissolve, as we take the Divine into our own bodies. We become the Holy of Holies, the sanctuary not made with human hands, bearing Christ as a gift God has given for a suffering world.

“In your patience possess your souls.” That’s a better translation of Luke’s Greek in the last line of our Gospel reading. “In your patience possess your souls.” You see, it matters a great deal less *who* the President of the United States is going to be—what matters more is who are you and I going to be?

Consent to God’s guidance through these uncharted waters toward the unity that only God can give. And trust that is *it is given*, given once and for all God’s children in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Watch for the Risen Christ in patience, without a preconceived defense, and seek to serve the kingdom of heaven that God continues to unveil. In time, we will begin to see to each other as Christ sees each of us.