

This morning's sermon might be one of the most challenging that I have preached since I started here.

It's not because we are all feeling a certain way.

If this were the case, it would be much easier to preach.

When we have consensus among us, I know how to preach to a stressed, happy, anxious or even grieving congregation.

But how do I preach to a divided congregation?

I suppose I should have kept all these sermon-prep musing's to myself, but I have always been an advocate for full disclosure.

And today I am disclosing how hard it is to offer one message to people whose emotional states are all over the map, at presumably more extreme levels than usual.

So, I will try to offer a helpful word to you, wherever you are.

If you are happy about the outcome of the election results, and you are excited about what they mean for the future of our country, then I ask you to be patient and compassionate with those who disagree with you.

I ask you to hold your cheers and applause because when one of us suffers, we all suffer, and we aren't the kind of people who celebrate in the face of another's despair.

And, if you believe in the positive changes that our new president-elect has promised our country, that he will unite us and work for the prosperity of all, then I invite you to help make it so.

Stand behind your candidate and do your part to make sure that his presidency means improved wages, working conditions and expanded civil rights for ALL people living in this great nation.

Living out your Christian values as one who believes that all people are created in the image of God, show your commitment to these values by doing everything in your power improve our great country and the world, for all of us.

And as a supporter of our new leader, do all that you can to hold him accountable; to make sure he does the same.

After all, even the most powerful leader in the free world cannot affect change in isolation, he needs your support.

However, a word of caution.

Many people are wary that this new presidency doesn't mean improved lives for all people, but only some, like rich white people.

So, I am personally asking you to stay engaged, to make sure the new president passes legislation, which is good for us, the international community, and the planet.

For those of you who are unhappy about the outcome of the election, my guess is that your emotions are probably all over the place, as well.

For those of you who are grieving, stay there.

I am not going to try to tell you to get over it, or move on.

You sit in your grief and sadness for as long as you need.

Sit on that ash heap, as Job did.

I know you won't sit there forever, the time will come when you are ready to rejoin the world and make positive change for all of us, but right now, take care of yourself.

Rest in your emotions.

For those of you who are angry, breathe.

Don't lash out.

Resist the temptation to engage Facebook and dinner table arguments.

I said something unkind to one person, and it wasn't even that bad, and I immediately felt like I had a rock in the pit of my stomach.

Just like the grieving person, you might not be ready to cross the aisle and shake hands with your adversary, and I respect that, but at least put the hand grenades down.

Talk to like-minded people to vocalize your rage, go for a walk, exercise, do something you love.

Heck, pour yourself into your work if it will help you for a few moments to take your mind off your anger, just don't lash out at those who disagree.

I promise it will make you feel worse, in the long run.

Okay, so I have spoken to those who are happy, those who are grieving, those who are angry, now, to those of you who are afraid... reach out.

Don't coil yourself up in a tight little ball, or if you do, at least tell someone first.

Know that in your life, the relationships you have, the people who were there for you on Monday and Tuesday, they were still there for you on Wednesday, and they are still there for you.

This church is still here for you, as am I.

I am not here to argue whether anyone's fear has merit, because in my mind, fear is such a palpable and all-consuming emotion, that if you are afraid, nobody has the right to tell you that your emotions aren't valid.

If anyone does tell you that, ignore them.

You have a right to feel however they want.

So if you are afraid that your civil liberties are going to be taken away, or that the planet is suddenly in much worse peril, or that someone you love will be deported or will be the target of a hate crime, surround yourself with people who sympathize with you, who will comfort you, who will vow to protect you.

We are all still here for you, it might feel like everything literally changed overnight, but it actually didn't.

You still have your safe Burlington community, your church family, and we aren't going anywhere.

So thanks for showing up today, for allowing us to hear you and hold your fears for you.

And lastly, if you are neutral about this election, then please be present for those who are not.

You have the emotional energy to listen to and love and support those who feel upended, sickened and even traumatized, so please, check in with folks, ask how they are doing.

And if you witness anyone saying or doing hurtful things, stand up to them.

Other, weary people might only be able to summon the energy to ignore it, but if you aren't emotionally drained, then please be an ally for those who are really struggling, especially those who feel marginalized and bullied.

Today's text from the book of Isaiah was not chosen with the election in mind, but it's eerily appropriate.

The prophet said that God was *“about to create new heavens and a new earth; The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox... They shall not hurt or destroy on all [God's] holy mountain.”* (excerpts from Isaiah 65: 17-25).

Now, I know it might feel like this is the most divisive moment in history, but it's not.

It's not even the most painful.

Not to compare levels of pain, but the Israelites were pretty miserable too.

The prophet speaks to them in a language of liberation because they lived under the constant threat of conquerors.

The Israelites were often displaced, had their children taken from them, they were thrown out of their homes and off their lands, and Isaiah envisions a new reality for them.

Now, I know that the God of the Old Testament sometimes gets a bad rap for being vengeful, but I think that's simply the lens through which those authors wrote about God, that's not actually God's character, which is what Isaiah reminds us of.

*"The Bible insists that what God will do at the end of all things will be consistent with what God has always done:*

*Create a world full of beauty; assure a wayward people again and again of the love that will never change; set people free from everything that binds them."* ([www.thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com](http://www.thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com), 12.01.2010).

For those of us who have the energy, it is our job to help make it so, to help release the world of everything that binds us.

As for me, what the recent election has done has unbound me from my ignorance.

This election helped me see the United States in a fullness that I had never seen before, and it forced me to contend with the idea that I know very little about the lives of huge swaths of people in this country.

For those who live in the middle of the country, I confess that I don't understand their plight, their fears, their concerns, or their anger.

On Wednesday morning, I felt this urge to take a road trip west and just talk to people, listen to them rather, so I could get a better understanding of who they are,

because I realized that we are so deeply divided and I am so far on one side of the divide that I can hardly see the folks on the other side.

So this has all been an opportunity for me, and opportunity to better understand the struggles of those whose lived experiences are different from mine.

It has also been an opportunity to gain a slightly better understanding of the fear that marginalized folks have lived with in this country for decades, if not centuries.

A black friend of mine said, finally, you white people are feeling the fear that we've felt everyday, since we were brought over here.

Maybe now we will truly be able to empathize with each other, maybe this is the breaking point we needed, the rock-bottom, if you will, so that we can start to truly hear each other and repair the breach.

We are always becoming something new, nothing is static, and I have the foolish hope to believe that even in the midst of this turmoil, we are becoming something better.

If you have no energy, then stay where you are and take care of yourself until your reserves are replenished.

But if you have energy, then I invite you to join with me in showing the world extravagant love and understanding.

Even if you have hatred in your heart, as I confess I have had this past week, use that energy to help somebody, to take a deep breath and think before spewing vitriol.

Our community, our kindness and our compassion, our commitment to our principles, are needed now as much as they ever were.

So let us work together so that God's will might be done here on earth, as it is in heaven. Amen.