

When I had just started out as a pastor, one of my prophetic mentors said to me, Angela, *“Every Sunday, just remember to preach like you don’t have a job to lose.”*

I remember hearing that and thinking well, that’s nice but you are retired and you live off a comfortable pension, so you literally can preach like you don’t have a job to lose.

I, on the other hand, was 25 at the time, hadn’t earned anyone’s trust or respect yet, because I was brand new, some of you might have been a little skeptical about my age, so I wasn’t about to preach like I didn’t have a job to lose because I literally did have a job that I loved and didn’t want to risk losing.

Well, that was 4 years ago and times were different I feel like there is so much more on the line now.

But more importantly, I don’t have a choice, because I am sad and angry and frustrated and it’s personal.

As Christians, we have a moral responsibility to respond to what is happening to our country.

So yes, for the foreseeable future, I will be preaching like I have a job to lose.

I am speaking truth to power because we don’t have the privilege of staying silent, of staying polite anymore.

I am thinking about how to act and what to preach based upon how I think my future self will want me to have acted in this moment.

When we look back at this time in 4, 8, or even 50 years from now, I want us to be proud of what we said and did, not ashamed and embarrassed that we stood by while the Constitution was tossed out the window,

while our brothers and sisters were denied their basic human rights.

As the Irish politician Edmund Burke famously said, *“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”*

So yes, I am preaching like I don't have a job to lose, because yes, I answer to each and every one of you, but I answer to God first.

And when I took my ordination vows, I promised to be faithful to Gospel the message to preach it in light of our current, modern context.

I have a responsibility not to shy around what is happening or delicately straddle the line so as not to offend anyone, but to boldly say that it is immoral, unconscionable and unconstitutional to ban immigrants from the United States based on their nation of origin or religious affiliation.

That is exactly what happened this past week.

For those of you who are not aware, enacted with the stroke of a pen on Friday,

our new president “*suspended entry of all refugees to the United States for 120 days,*

barred Syrian refugees indefinitely,

and blocked entry into the United States for 90 days for citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.”¹

The Nationality Act of 1965 states that “*no person shall receive any preference or priority or be discriminated against in the issuance of an immigrant visa because of the person’s race, sex, nationality, place of birth, or place of residence.*”²

And it was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

It is also illegal to favor one religion over another, and our new president says that Christians will be given immigration priority over Muslims.

If we are to say that we see the sacred worth in all people, that we are going to treat others the way we want to be treated,

if we are to claim that we are willing to follow a man all the way to the foot of the Cross,

then now is the time to walk the walk.

¹Shear, Michael D. and Nicholas Kulish. “*Trump’s Order Blocks Immigrants at Airports, Stoking Fear Around*

² <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/8/1152>

I am sorry if you came to church this morning seeking a warm and fuzzy sermon, because that's not what I am here to deliver.

I came to preach a sacred and hard truth because I know that we as people of courageous faith have everything we need to respond to this political crisis.

We were called to such a time as this.

That is a reference from the Book of Esther, but it's one of the favorite lines of our General Minister and President, Rev. John Dorhauer.

This is the moment we have been waiting for, to step out and speak out on behalf of God's most vulnerable children around the world.

We cannot profess to be Christians and stand idly by.

That luxury isn't ours anymore.

And you might wonder to yourself, what can I do?

This is all so big, and so far beyond me.

It is, but it's not.

You can call or write to our elected officials.

Send mail directly to Congress or even the White House.

Or call or write our representatives on Beacon Hill, reach out to our representative Ken Gordon, he'd love to hear from you.

Or, if political action isn't your thing, you can still affect the lives of those who are struggling.

You can be a friend and ally to anyone who is afraid for their lives who feels like they are in danger, let them know that you stand with them.

If you are able, go to the streets.

If you have the means, donate to an organization that is committed to protecting our civil liberties.

We must not be silent when the Constitution is being thrown out,

when departments like the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Park Service, the Center for Disease Control and NASA are banned from using Twitter,

and when our new president's chief strategist says in an interview that the media needs to "keep its mouth shut and listen for a while."

Folks, this isn't normal, none of this is normal and we must remind ourselves of this truth day in, and day out.

We must not accept this new reality, as it is antithetical to everything we believe as Christians, it threatens world peace and global stability and life as we know it.

The United States is neither too big, nor too rich, to fail.

This is not partisan games anymore, this is us advocating for a world in which we are not threatened by people of other lands, but we are in relationship with them.

There are 2 reasons why we need to fight against the war that is being waged against immigrants.

Those two reasons are because we are Americans and we are Christians.

I would begin to assume that all of us came from immigrants at some point, that's what this nation is built on.

So, if you are American, it's in our DNA to be pro-immigrant, and if you're Christian, well,

the U.C.C. recently put out an article that listed SIXTY scriptures in our Bible that speak to welcoming the immigrant or the refugee.

I wont read them all, but here are some of the more powerful ones:

Exodus 22:21 – Moses gives God's law: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

Leviticus 19:33-34 and 24:22 – When the alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 10:18-19 – “For the Lord your God...loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Matthew 25:31-“...I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Hebrews 13:1-2 – “...show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels...”

I John 4:7-21 – “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God... We love because God first loved us.”

and lastly, our text for today, **Micah 6:8**, “what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

“We could use these simple words as a kind of plumb line for our beliefs, practices and ethical rules, to measure how well they align with God's vision for the world.”³

We are really good at doing kindness.

We love one another and the world, we help others, we repent and apologize and forgive.

We are kind all over the place, all the time, and I thank God for that because it's crucial that we be kind to one another in order to live in community together.

But kindness isn't going to repeal the ban against Muslims or protect the environment or our right to free speech.

³Matthews, Kathryn. “http://www.ucc.org/worship_samuel_sermon_seeds_january_29_2017#micah.”

That's why we also need to do justice, as the text says.

Or as the prophet, Cornel West says, "*Justice is what love looks like in public.*"

We have to take our love of people and of our country to the streets, to Beacon Hill, to Washington D.C.

Our moral fabric is shredding at the seams and if we are going to be audacious enough to call ourselves Christians, then we have to respond.

I will tell you right now that Jesus would have been one of the first people at J.F.K. airport, welcoming immigrants who had just landed.

Or, more realistically, he wouldn't have been there because he was Middle Eastern and would have been among those who are no longer allowed to enter our country for the next 120 days.

If you get despondent or feel overwhelmed or hopeless, please don't isolate yourself.

Please don't stay away.

Stick with us, with this community.

We need each other to be reminded that all hope is not lost, that most people do believe in decency and goodness and respect.

And most importantly, we need to be present for each other to continually remind ourselves that love will win.

Love is stronger than hate, it might not feel like it right now.

But it is.

And now is the time to put our love into action.

I will leave you with this poem by Danny Bryck...

I know, I know
If you could go back you
would walk with Jesus
You would march with King
Maybe assassinate Hitler
At least hide Jews in your basement
It would all be clear to you
But people then, just like you
were baffled, had bills to pay
and children they didn't understand
and they too
were so desperate for normalcy
they made anything normal
Even turning everything inside out
Even killing, and killing, and it's easy
for turning the other cheek
to be looking the other way, for walking
to be talking, and they hid
in their houses
and watched it on television, when they had television,
and wrung their hands
or didn't, and your hands
are just like theirs.
Lined, permeable,
small,
and you would follow Caesar, and quote McCarthy, and

Hoover, and you would want
to make Germany great again.
Because you are afraid, and your
parents are sick, and your
job pays shit and where's your
dignity? Just a little dignity and those kids sitting down in the
highway,
and chaining themselves to
buildings, what's their problem? And that kid
That's King. And this is Selma. And Berlin. And Jerusalem. And
now
is when they need you to be brave.
Now
is when we need you to go back
and forget everything you know
and give up the things you're chained to
and make it look so easy in your
grandkids' history books (should they still have them)
Now
is when it will all be clear to them.

Amen.