

“Don’t Fear the Future”
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Menifee United Church of Christ

The 2000 Presidential election, I’ll never forget, thanks to my daughter. In the fall of 2000 I was watching the evening news. One of the Presidential candidates came on TV. My daughter, who was then 8 years old, walked up to the TV, turned around, shook her behind, and said, “Talk to the butt, ‘cause the ears ain’t listening.” Now I never said that, so I don’t know where she got that exactly. The 2000 election was quite a stunner. Al Gore won the popular vote by about 500,000 votes, but George W. Bush won the Supreme Court vote, by one vote, and thus the election, the electoral college. It was a heart-breaking time for many people, who apparently were hoping Al Gore would win. (I think including my daughter.)

Donald Trump has won the presidency. Hillary Clinton won more than a million votes more than he did, but he won the electoral college vote and thus is the president-elect and will take office on January 20, 2017. Not everybody is happy with that. Some people are delighted by it, but some people are devastated by it, and this sermon is probably more directed to those people, since the church usually reaches out to those who are hurting. I’ve called this sermon “Don’t Fear the Future” and I hope by the end of this sermon that those who do fear the future will be a little less fearful.

The Bible tells us about this situation, believe it or not, even though it’s 2,000 years old, and even though this Scripture passage was chosen years ago by theologians and religious experts, it applies pretty well today. I think it’s more than coincidence, I think it’s providence. Jesus is teaching in the Temple and he’s talking about the end times. Some of the people there say, “When will this occur?” Jesus says there will be false prophets, people who say they are coming in my name, there will be wars and rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, but even though you may be persecuted, even though you may be imprisoned, not a hair on your head will perish. I think what this is saying to people today is: don’t fear the future.

Don’t fear the future. The Bible is full of that message. Jesus on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” But God didn’t forsake Jesus. In a few weeks, we’ll hear the Scripture, “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” “Fear not” is repeated frequently throughout the Bible. Don’t be afraid. Jesus says, “Do not be afraid.” I think especially Christians do not need to be afraid. Because we know, as it says in Luke 21, not a hair of your head will perish. I think that’s true.

God is with us during troubled times. God does not want us to perish. Isaiah, a prophet who speaks for God in Isaiah 65, God is speaking and saying, I’m going to build a new heaven and a new earth and all will be well. There’ll be no more tears. A wolf will eat with the lamb. Now just this past week, to demonstrate that, Donald Trump met with President Obama. They shook hands. I don’t think they ate together, but they spent 90 minutes together. These are two people, one of whom said the other one was not fit to be the president and the other one said that his presidency was a disaster. They sat down together and shook hands and spoke for an hour and a half. There is hope. There is hope for the future and we don’t have to fear it.

Jesus tells us what to do. Jesus teaches us. “You’ve heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,’ but I say to you, ‘Love your enemies.’” We have to do that, whether we are Trump supporters or whether we are Hillary supporters, we have to love our enemies. Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.” We need to love one another. Jesus said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” That’s what we need to do, both sides. We need to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Now that may take a little time. It’s good that Donald Trump doesn’t take office until January 20th, 2017, to give us time to work through that.

Jim Wallis is the founder and editor of Sojourners magazine. Sojourners magazine has been around for decades, started when Jim Wallis was in seminary in Chicago. They speak out for justice and equality. Jim Wallis wrote this past week “First we pray, then we march.” We’ve seen people marching in Los Angeles and New York City and Chicago and Baltimore. All across the country people are marching in opposition to the incoming president, and there’s talk that there’s going to be a Tea Party on the left as there was a Tea Party on the right three weeks after President Obama took office. We’ll have to see whether we can come together as a country or whether there will be this divide. We’ll have to wait and see.

Churches don’t pay taxes. I don’t always agree with that. (I hope the Trustees will forgive me.) But I understand it, up close and personal this week. Because churches have to be able to speak out for justice without fear or favor from the government. Churches have to be able to help those in need, and we may be called upon to do that. The reason people are marching is, in just a couple months 11 million of our neighbors may be ripped from their families and

deported south of the border. Twenty million of our neighbors may lose their health insurance if Obamacare is eliminated. Workers who struggle now with a minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour may struggle even more because their minimum wage may not be raised over the next four or eight years. In fact, it may be eliminated. Women may lose the right to control their own bodies. Churches are going to have to help people in need. Churches may be called on to provide sanctuary to people who are facing deportation. Churches may be called upon to provide food and clothing to people who may be hurting in the coming months and years. That's what we are here for. Churches are here to help people in need, for whatever reason they need. I think if churches can pick up the slack as much as possible, then maybe there isn't so much to fear from the future.

Bobby McFerrin has a song that may be a little flippant for today, but I like it and hopefully it brings a smile to our faces. It's from a long time ago, so some of you may not have been alive to hear it. "Don't Worry, Be Happy." "Here's a little song I wrote. You might want to sing it note for note. Don't worry, be happy. In every life we have some trouble. When you worry, you make it double. Don't worry, be happy." Now that might be a little simplistic to say that four or five days after the election. But I do think that it's up to each one of us not to worry, but to be happy and to be ready as a church if we're needed to help people in need.

On election night, or really at 3 o'clock the next morning, I texted my daughter, who's now 24. She's no longer 8 years old. She spent the last three months volunteering for the Hillary campaign, so I texted her and I said, "Dear Erin, I am so proud of you. I hope you're not discouraged by the results tonight. Love, Dad." But before I pressed Send, my phone rang. It was my daughter. I don't think that was coincidence, I think that was Providence. She was crying. (I wonder who she gets that from.) And I said, "Sweetie, please don't cry. You did the best you could." And she said, "I'm not crying because of me. I'm crying because of this woman I met, who said she would have died of cancer if it wasn't for Obamacare. Now that's going to be eliminated." Again, I don't know what's going to happen. I've read that maybe all of Obamacare is not going to be eliminated. But the future will tell. Again, I think we just have to be ready. We have to not fear the future. We just have to be ready for it. To help where we're needed. To be there for people. That's why we're here. God may one day create a new heaven and a new earth, but we're here to create heaven on earth. That's what we're supposed to do, I believe, create heaven on earth for as many people as we can. I think if we do that, then we, and they, don't have to fear the future.

Let us pray:
God of love,
Help us to not fear the future.
Help us to be ready for the future.
Help us to help people in the future.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

*(This sermon was delivered without manuscript or notes,
and was transcribed from a tape recording of it.)*