

November 6, 2016

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lord, let our prayer come into your presence. Incline your ear to our cry for help

Let our yes be yes and our no be no and our never be never

A nation in crisis

Our nation is in spiritual desolation, not depression - desolation. Any time we find ourselves separated from God's Spirit, any time there is a dissonance, dissension, starkness or barrenness within us, we are in conflict with God, we are in desolation.

I have here a chart showing the increase in the number of hate groups in the U.S. in the past ten years and where they are. In 2001 there were 158; in 2012 there were 1360; in 2015 there were 898. These include Ku Klux Klan, Black Separatists, Racist Skinheads, White Nationalists, Neo-Nazis, Neo-Confederates, Christian Identity, and Anti-Gay. There were also 998 anti-government groups last year. Hate Groups are defined as having beliefs and practices that attack or malign an entire class of people. This is an indicator of the spiritual health of our country.

Pastors: what should you say two days before the election?

Jim Wallis writes in the most recent issue of Sojourner Magazine what he sees as contributing to this desolation and what pastors should say two days before this presidential election.

“Everyone seems to agree that this is an election like no other in modern times. It's more uncertain than ever how it will turn out, whether both sides will accept the results — even whether we will have a peaceful transition of power. Pastors tell me that they have never seen an election season sow such anxiety and fear, anger and conflict, and depression in their congregations. So I am writing this to you, pastors and spiritual leaders of Christians, to ask you four questions, hard questions. These do not just relate to our political candidates, but they pertain to us voters as well.

(I) *“Do you believe that racism is an issue that cuts to the heart of the gospel? Do you believe that racial bigotry has been spoken, used, fueled, and manipulated in this election? The racial divide among Christians will be painfully revealed next Tuesday. Many of our black and brown brothers and sisters in Christ are saying they are even more afraid for the safety of their children depending on the outcome of this election.*

(II) *“Isn't misogyny a gospel issue? Women across the political and theological spectrum have spoken out about their experiences of being exploited by men. What is your responsibility as pastor to speak about this? These are often taboo subjects in churches; that needs to change.*

(III) *“Isn’t making dishonesty and stealing a matter of public policy a gospel issue? This is having a catastrophic effect on the majority of American people who are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain a decent quality of life for themselves and their families.*

(IV) *“Most of us Christians affirm life from womb to tomb. Of course, we absolutely oppose abortion, but it’s not the only moral issue we face. Isn’t abandoning every other moral issue to address only abortion a gospel issue?”*

Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Convention sums all this up: *“The life issue cannot flourish in a culture of misogyny and sexual degradation. The life issue cannot flourish when we have people calling for the torture and murder of innocent non-combatants. The life issue cannot flourish when we have people who have given up on the idea that character matters. If we lose an election, we can live to fight another day and move on, but if we lose an election while giving up our very soul, then we have really lost it all.”*

This election is going to impact the lives of every person on this planet

I was just sent this attachment to an email this afternoon which is relevant here. It is from “World Peace Pulse.” It is a lovely, hopeful invitation. Let us listen to it:

“We can all probably agree that nothing good can come from negative energy in the U. S. presidential election. It doesn't matter if you're Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, or Independent. It doesn't matter if you live in the United States or some place else. This election is going to impact the lives of every person on this planet.

*“This Sunday, November 6th, at **4pm PST**, people from every state in the U.S. and many countries around the world are joining together for 15 minutes in a synchronized meditation to positively impact the U.S. general election. Imagine what has already been done in the past. We have seen miracles occur when massive numbers of people come together in this way. Science has proven the powerful effects this can have on situations of violence.*

“Celebrate your life along with many others by stopping whatever you're doing on Sunday at 4pm P.S.T. and focus your energy on a positive outcome to this election. This could be the most positive thing you can do to bring peace to this country and to everyone in the world.”

We don’t engage in this contemplation to change others; that is bias. We do this to change ourselves; that is gospel. We hear, *“We need to vote our conscience.”* This is true, but voting our conscience is not about winning; voting our conscience is about bringing us to our knees in compassion for the marginalized. This could include our candidates! Accepting this invitation this afternoon could well be the most positive thing we can do to bring peace to this country and to everyone in the world.

Let our yes be yes and our no be no and our never be never