

ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: Jn. 18:33-38; 19:9-11

“The Sleeping Giant Woke Up! – What Now?”

AN UNPRECEDENTED ELECTION DAY

Last Sunday afternoon, as I was coming home from St. Mary’s Hospital after visiting one of our members, I was listening to the Family Life Network (FM 89.1 or FM 95.7). In between the music a short message came on which talked about how in a survey of pastors across the country, when asked if the Bible addresses political and social issues, 90% said yes. But then when asked if they ever address those issues from the pulpit, 90% said no! Then the person made the astute observation – “a silent pulpit means a silent pew.” In other words, if the clergy of our churches are not addressing the political and social issues of the day, how can we expect the people in the pews to be able to respond to those issues in a manner that reflects God’s Word? And if we don’t know what God’s Word says about the issues of the day, how will we be able to truly be the light and salt of the earth?

Of course, one example of following what God’s Word says about the issues is to pray for our nation and leaders. The Apostle Paul writes in **I Tim. 2:1-2**, “*I urge everyone, therefore, that prayers be made for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness*” Prayer is the most tangible expression of trust in God. And that is what we did last Monday night. And we weren’t the only ones. There were thousands of prayer meetings across the country. I am happy to report that we had 48 parishioners from our congregation that evening. I told every person there that regardless of what happens on Tuesday you will always remember the time we spend in prayer and you can say, “I did my part.”

And then certainly, part two was to vote. Many here who weren’t able to make Monday night I am sure were in prayer for our nation and did vote. And we saw what happened. The Sleeping Giant Woke Up! Last Tuesday we witnessed an unprecedented election day - results that confounded the pundits and the so-called elites of our society – the media – who still can’t believe they got the election wrong, Hollywood – many are still in tears, academia – now letting kids skip exams and not turn in their homework because their students are so upset! The business world - I read where one female vice-president of a business said that when she woke up at 4 AM to see who won, she threw up. Even the pollsters were way off. Very few saw it coming. But the fact remains that Donald Trump won big in the majority of the states. He may have lost the popular vote by about a half million but that was because of California and New York – two states where neither candidate campaigned.

MY TAKE ON THE ELECTION

Why did Trump win? There were several reasons. First, voter turnout; Rural America came out in droves. Evangelical Christians came out and voted for Trump to a tune of 80%. The majority of white women voted for him. And 30% of Hispanics voted for him – more than Mitt Romney received in 2012! Furthermore, he broke the blue wall of the rustbelt – winning Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin - and just narrowly losing Minnesota which had not gone Republican since 1972. In fact, one commentator remarked how a pollster in PA said they had never before seen so many of the folks coming to the polls. When he asked elderly woman who hadn’t voted in decades, why she came out this time, she simply replied, “the Supreme Court.”

Second, Hillary Clinton was not a strong candidate. She had too much baggage and as a result many Democrats stayed home. In many respects, her character and trustworthiness were no better than Trump’s!

Third, Obama has not been a strong leader. He never was able to bring the nation together. His vision of hope and change never materialized. And rather than compromise, he issued hundreds of executive orders. He lost the Congress to the Republicans overwhelmingly in the 2010 and 2014 Congressional Elections, and now in 2016 his Democrats were once again soundly defeated. What we witnessed was the pendulum effect – that when a leader and government goes to one extreme, the nation as a whole usually replaces that person with someone on the other extreme.

Finally, Obama championed a liberal social agenda that was not only ardently pro-choice but included assaults on religious liberty and traditional marriage. His administration celebrated the Supreme Court decision which requires a state to license a homosexual marriage by lighting up the White House in rainbow colors. With the Affordable Care Act, his technocrats tried to force religious groups, including the *Nuns for the Poor*, to pay for abortions and birth-control in violation of their conscience. He pushed bathroom edicts on public schools and appointed transgender bureaucrats to White House faith-based councils. His Pentagon now boasts a gay men’s chorus and christened a navy warship, the *USS Harvey Milk*, after a well-known gay activist. This past September, Obama appointee, Martin Castro, Commission Chairman of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, urged limitations on our First Amendment liberties when he said that religious liberty and freedom are “*code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance.*” It is clear who Castro feels are the real persecutors – Bible-believing Christians! The truth is we are one vote away in the Supreme Court from losing your right of conscience in your business and who knows what other rights!

Such trends on the federal level have trickled down to the states. This past August, Republican governor of Illinois, Bruce Rauner, signed legislations forcing pro-life physicians, pregnancy care centers, and related organizations to participate in the abortion industry, even if they are conscientious objectors. In Vermont, officials wanted to force Christian healthcare professionals to provide assisted-suicide counseling. And here in NY, when Cynthia and Robert Gifford, a Christian couple that owns a farm near Albany, declined to rent the venue to a same-sex couple for a wedding ceremony, they were fined by a lower court \$13,000 for violating the couple’s civil rights! In January, the state’s Supreme Court upheld that verdict!

Clearly, many in our nation have had enough of the hypocrisy and double standard of the left. The voters who were concerned about such trends spoke. They voted their conscience. They voted for a man who would not only respect the sanctity of life from conception to death but who will respect the conscience of every religious citizen.

But now we have seen the reaction of those who did not get their way. Protests in the streets, Miley Cyrus bawling her eyes out on Facebook, college students thinking their world has collapsed and going to “safe places” on campus where they can shed tears and be comforted by one another. How ironic that on this Veteran’s Day weekend one can look back and remember that over seventy-two years ago, our 18 and 19 year olds were storming the shores of Normandy, while today they are seeking crying rooms!

I just saw an interview where former Attorney General Eric Holder said he was in the process of writing an article supporting the abolishment of the Electoral College because Republicans have not won the popular vote twice in the last sixteen years. What he forgets is that the Founding Fathers wanted us to be protected from

the tyranny of the majority. Hence, we are not a pure democracy; we are a republican style democracy where we are represented by individuals who cast their votes for us – whether it be legislators or electors. The truth is the Electoral College prevents one state from having too much power over other states. It actually is for our benefit. But not so for some who are on the left when they can't get their own way. Seriously, would you want California and New York City calling the shots for our nation?

Of course, it should be noted that there are those who unfortunately are afraid because of the media hype and from real bigotry that has been bolstered by the tone of the election campaign. But the hypocrisy of the left is breathtaking. I personally find it ironic and disturbing that for many on the left (who are supposed to be so open-minded) as soon as they don't get their way or you disagree with them they shut down any dissent. We see this on college campuses. Such thinking and behavior is unacceptable. It is contrary to the democratic and the free expression of ideas.

But do you want to know the real reason why people are so distraught and fearful? It is because of wherein their trust lies. Is it in government? Is it in their fellow man? They will always be disappointed. The only One we can trust is Almighty God and the One who is God in the flesh, His Son, Jesus Christ! Christ is our only hope, PERIOD!

GOD IS IN CONTROL!

What does God's Word say about government and nations? **Psalm 22:28:** *For the kingdom is the LORD'S And He rules over the nations.* It was King Jehoshaphat who acknowledged in **2 Chron. 20:6**, *“O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You.”*

Man may rule, but God overrules. He allows all those in authority to be in charge for better or for worse. But for the believer we recognize an even more important truth. God's Kingdom is what it is all about, and therefore we need to be all about God's Kingdom. Remember how Jesus began His ministry? With the words, *“Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!”* The message of the Gospel is to repent of our sin and to turn to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior so that the Kingdom can be experienced in our personal lives and so that the Kingdom can be seen in us in such a way that others will want to enter the kingdom as well.

Remember Jesus said to Nicodemus in **John 3:3**, *“Unless you are born again, you can't enter the Kingdom of God.”* That is a matter-of-fact statement. It is not sugarcoated; it is straightforward. There must be a spiritual rebirth in us if we are to see and experience God's Kingdom

Please turn with me now to **John 18**, where we read what happened when Jesus was brought before the highest authority in Judea at the time – the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate questions Jesus and asks, *“Are You the King of the Jews?”* **34** Jesus answered, *“Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”* **35** Pilate answered, *“I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?”* **36** Jesus answered, *“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”* **37** Therefore Pilate said to Him, *“So You are a king?”* Jesus answered, *“You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”* **38** *What is truth?”*

Jesus again shows what is most important in life – the Kingdom of God. All the kingdoms of this world are passing away. Kings and rulers and presidents have only temporary authority. Not so with Christ. His authority is eternal. God's Kingdom is not of this world. It transcends time and space. It is a supernatural reality. It is why in God's Kingdom it is what you can't see – one's heart/character – that is most important.

Why did Jesus come to earth? There are many reasons He came but He tells Pilate the main reason here - He came ***"to testify to the truth."*** He came to show us what is really real. Everything He said, everything He did, and everything He is, is truth! That's why He said in **Jn. 14:6**, ***"I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*** And yet, how did Pilate respond? The same way many in our world respond, "What is truth?"

In **Jn. 19**, Jesus is brought before Pilate a second time. We read, beginning in verse 9, that Pilate ***"entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.10 So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."***

Do not think that anyone forcibly took Christ's life. He laid it down on His own initiative at His Father's request. Pilate thought that he was in charge. Jesus corrects him. He would have no authority unless God allowed him to be in the position he is in. At that point, Pilate starts to think maybe this guy is really above my pay grade. And he then tries to get Jesus released!

Jesus said in **Jn:14:27**, ***"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you."*** True peace and purpose can only be found in God's Kingdom. And God's Kingdom can only be experienced when the King (the Lord Jesus Christ) rules our hearts. God's Kingdom is not about what we can see or taste or touch or hear or smell. It reflects the unseen spiritual realm. And once we are born again, we become not only partakes of that realm but we become agents of His Kingdom authority and power. We then can testify to the truth that has changed our lives.

But we can't do it without God's authority and power. Jesus said in **Mt. 28:18-19**, ***"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, Go therefore and make disciples...."*** And then in **Acts 1:8** He said, ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be My witnesses..."***

Do you see what Jesus did? He gave us His kingdom authority and His kingdom power to make disciples and to be His witnesses in our world. In life there is an important rule when it comes to authority and power. Authority without power is weakness. Power without authority is abuse. Jesus gives us both to experience and to reflect His Kingdom. You can't have one without the other.

So our work has just begun. We have witnessed a potential for good as a result of this election. But ultimately what is most important is what happens next. The sleeping giant did indeed awaken. Now what will we do? My prayer is that we continue to pray for our leaders and for our nation. My prayer is that we stay connected with one another in the Body of Christ. My prayer is that we make a difference in our own worlds, knowing that we work for a King who will never disappoint and who will never fail! It is why Jesus said, ***"Don't worry about what you are going to eat or what you are going to wear, but SEEK FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you!"***

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, AMEN!