

Spirituality of Story  
Rev. Hannah Petrie  
November 13, 2016

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” He also said, “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend.”

And he said, “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.”

It is a sacred time, this. We begin our sacred time with a prelude.

OPENING WORDS # 560

READINGS

Richard Russo

RUSSO: I have a friend of mine who always says, in a democracy, you always, always get what you deserve. And apparently, we deserve Donald Trump . . . we've been hearing a lot of talk about jobs. But I would draw a distinction between jobs and work. I don't have a job, but I have tons and tons of work. That work sustains me. I'm doing something that gives my life meaning, it connects me to other people.

I think when you lose a job, you have less money and you get scared. But when you lose work, which has happened to many of Donald Trump's supporters - or they fear is going to happen to them - you lose your dignity. Maybe you're nobody. Maybe you don't matter.

I think that Trump supporters have really been worried about their sense of not belonging anymore. If I blame Trump supporters for anything, it's that if they've been feeling undervalued, denigrated, ignored, that's not a new feeling. It's just new to them, you know? Black people in America have felt that way for a long time. So have Latinos . . . it's a new era in one way, and in other ways, it's just the same old world. It hasn't really changed. And I don't think that the purpose of literature has changed either. I think we writers do have a responsibility, first to entertain, but second to instruct by bearing witness. If we had a great responsibility before this election, I would say we have, perhaps, an even greater one today.

And what I was talking about earlier, in making a distinction between jobs and work, the thing that I'm most convinced of is that in the larger sense of work, when I leave the studio here, Renee, after talking with you, I'm going to go back home and go get back to

work as a writer, as a husband, as a father of two distraught daughters who went out and bought pantsuits to vote on Election. My sense is that I have work to do. And I want to get back to it.

Rev. Joey Lyons

This is such a hard feeling, and even harder to steel myself to be in the moment, knowing more waves are coming. Wherever you are, you are loved, you are powerful. We are still here. I see you. I hear you. One of the most radical things you can do is to introduce people to one another.

Three words are on my heart.

**Mutuality.** Much is coming that will test us. Our relationships with one another need to spiral outward to listen and build yet again with the deepest practices of respect and reciprocity.

**Healing.** The racism and xenophobia are real, and POC can't reach and heal everyone. I appreciate our white movement family for their support, and believe we gotta also lift them up to reach more white folks.

**Organize.** Organizing generates the power to heal and strengthen our communities. It can be done in every sector, from any position. To build 1-1 with people, to understand their concerns, to collectivize and campaign for solutions.

I close my eyes and think of the women suffragists and black abolitionists who struggled for a lifetime and never experienced the right to vote and freedom. We will stand up again and again to the bully, calling on their behavior.

Win or lose, every person you connected with during this election made a difference. Reflect on your relationships. Make a plan to follow up with them, to refresh your dialogue. Find new ways to connect. Take on new opportunities to learn and grow.

PRAYER #567 To Be of Use

SHARING

HOMILY

I want to acknowledge that many of you are suffering and afraid. As you've heard, you're not alone. This is going to be a homily of silver linings, and one of those silver linings is that this wonderful liberal church community where we love and are loved is not going anywhere, and is only going to grow stronger in the months and years to come.

Now is the time to invite your friends who are feeling lonely and scared – tell them about this beautiful safe haven, where we seek to uplift and affirm one another. Where, through

music, art, free thought, and inspiration, we encourage one another to make a difference in the world – in our families, our places of work, and in the larger community.

And that's the story I want to tell this morning. I want to avoid continuing the punditry you've heard all week. Yes, I have my own feelings and opinions about what happened, and I'll share those with you, if you're interested. But, I'm your spiritual leader. My message for you is one of hope, and good things to come.

Our worship theme this month is Story. Originally I was going to be preaching a sermon today about understanding your spirituality in a framework of story. So many of you are creative people, and I know that would resonate, looking at all the plot twists of your life, and seeing what the big themes are. Who are the main characters that have influenced you, who are the unexpected heroes and villains, and has there been resolution, or is it on-going? What is the arc of *your* character? What is the main action?

Today, I'm offering the story action and activism. Story and narrative are such a big part of American politics and history. Our American story began with extreme oppression of native people and people of color, especially African slaves. That oppression continues to this day, but here's some good news. There are activist movements gaining momentum in recent months and years, and the irony may be that they are even more motivated and determined than ever with the election of Donald Trump. It depends on people like us to make that choice. Will we join them?

The best message I can give you today is this: mourn if you must, and many of us must. But when you're done, take that fury and fear and disappointment and do something constructive with it. Join the movements that already exist and lend your talents and your voice. Find your community of people who care deeply like you. Counter the hate crimes on the rise, committed against people of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community. I can help you find those movements if you need assistance. We already have the anti-gun violence movement alive and well in this church, and like every progressive movement, now it's more important than ever. Join the feminist movement. And/or, *create* the movement you want to join.

This Tuesday, I'm going to the Army Corps of Engineers office building on Wilshire, to participate in a worldwide day of protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline, which transgresses the rights of our native people. Not nativists, but the descendants of the actual Native Americans. It's from 12 PM to 2 PM – let me know if you want to come, too.

Protesting an oil pipeline that's in North Dakota may seem far removed, but it's not. We live in such a small world now, and the story of climate change is everyone's story. More than anything else, my biggest fear is going backwards in the progress we're making toward clean energy and a sustainable world for our children and their children.

So I'm going to do something about it.

For me, activism has been a part of my story for several years now, so it doesn't seem so daunting to, simply, continue the work. I was very active in raising the minimum wage in Pasadena last year, and have done much to build bridges to Muslims in the area. Those are a couple of my areas – we all have our individual passions and concerns, and I encourage you to follow your heart toward where you'd like to be involved. Take friends with you, and know that one good thing to come is that you'll make friends along the way - *if* you show up. And show up, and show up.

Half of life is about showing up. I believe that. You may not always feel like it, you may be tired. But more often than not, when you show up, you're glad you did. This is how we empower ourselves and our fellow human beings.

So let us recall the words of Joe Hill who said, "Mourn. And then organize." And beyond that, take good care of yourselves. The stress of this traumatic election has taken its toll. I haven't had a cold in years and now I have one. I need to look after myself better and so do many of us.

But I look *forward* to the future. Our work is cut out for us. With Hilary as our president, it's likely many of us would have sat back into complacency. It's a good thing that we *cannot* do that now, for the truth of the matter is, all of our biggest concerns were still in full throttle under Democratic leadership. Too much green house gas, too much war, too much police state, too much corporate power, too much suffering of the poor and disenfranchised. Too much injustice. This is the human story of which we are a part.

The progressive task has always been before us, and now more than ever, it's time to try new things. Like forming the unlikely friendships we've wondered about. Like listening to and working with those with whom we think we have nothing in common.

If it's true, in a democracy, we get the leader we deserve. If that strikes you as hogwash, keep in mind, only 25% of the American people voted for Trump, 25% voted for Hilary, and 47% of the American people *did not* vote. So it's not only conversations with Trump voters I urge you to have, but also with non-voters. Let's get to work, and earn the leader *all* of America deserves in the future. If issues and personal rights are not your thing, jump into the political fight, and help find the next progressive leader who can win the White House in 2020.

Right now, we have to live with not knowing what's coming. We have to wait, and this not-knowing is an anxiety factory. Rather than sitting, and not knowing, and worrying, the best salve is being pro-active in the interim.

People of color, tell us white people what we can do. White people, let's use our white privilege to demolish white privilege. Men, we could use your strength in the feminist fight.

Everyone, let's call on our deepest spiritual reserves to do the hard work of mutuality. Relationship-building and activism *is* spiritual practice – it's how we affirm who we are

and walk our talk of compassion, equality, and inclusion. So be strong. Be well. Fight with heart and hope. Amen.