

Endurance
Rev. Nicole Farley
First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
November 13, 2016

Psalm 98

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song,
for he has done marvelous things.

His right hand and his holy arm
have gained him victory.

² The Lord has made known his victory;
he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness
to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.

⁴ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

⁵ Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.

⁸ Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy

⁹ at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming
to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with equity.

Luke 21:5–19

⁵ When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

⁷ They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, “I am he!” and, “The time is near!” Do not go after them.

⁹ ‘When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.’ ¹⁰Then he said to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹² ‘But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

My message to you this morning is a simple one: we must be good to one another. After Tuesday’s election, I revisited the lectionary texts for this week with a mind to choose different ones for today. I realized quickly that the Holy Spirit was wiser than I and so I stuck with them. What was on my mind was fear - how it was on the ballot for both parties - some fearing changes that have been happening and some fearing that changes which have happened might be undone. Jesus says in Luke: “When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified.” This national level of hateful disagreement left me fearful, if not terrified. I would be surprised if you couldn’t guess for which candidate I voted. Yet, it’s important to be clear that I voted not for the candidate, per se, but for the people whose lives would most benefit from the candidate’s platform because I felt they were most in need of benefit. That does **not** mean that I think any less of you if you voted for the other candidate or the other candidate’s platform, and I hope the same is true between you and me. It just may mean that our fears, and perhaps our desires, were and are different. Jesus says, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.” In our country this has looked like side against side, neighbor against neighbor, even family against family, because our fears divided us. But we must be good to one another.

Psalm 98 may feel a ridiculous fit this morning for a country with deep rifts, and in a week when hate crimes have increased noticeably since the election results were made final.

The high school Jim attended had someone scrawl “white’s [sic] only” on a bathroom stall. At a friend’s child’s school, a lunch time chant of “build that wall” grew and was directed at the children of Mexican descent. A building elsewhere in our nation was tagged with graffiti of the swastika and a message of “Make America White Again.” These actions galvanized my pre-election fears. Pastor Laura Patterson has described what I am afraid of so I want to use her eloquent words. “I decided to name my fear...of the normalizing of bigotry that has been happening over the past eighteen months of this election season. It makes me scared, it makes me angry, it makes me sad to see the outright displays of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and so many other things that we have previously as a society agreed were not acceptable. Now they are printed on shirts, emblazoned on bumpers, chanted at rallies, spray painted on walls, and shouted at human beings - both children and adults.”¹ We’re far beyond candidates at this point - one’s platform opened the door for this hidden behavior and emboldened it. Post-election we are no longer about the candidates; we need to now be about ourselves and those around us. The fears of those driven to racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, etc. are laid bare and we can no longer ignore them, because that’s what got us here - not hearing, not acknowledging, the fears which are acted out with hateful words and hateful deeds. As a people generally not targeted - white and straight - we have an obligation to give those targeted time and space to heal while we begin this work. This is what Jesus did; this is who Jesus was. And that is why I kept Psalm 98 in this morning’s readings. Professor Kathleen McManus, in describing God’s activity in Psalm 98, writes “That power is at work in history; that new creation begins with hope for a people experiencing *threatened humanum*, hope rooted in the fullness of the *humanum* encountered in Christ.” She continues, “Edward Schillebeeckx uses the term *humanum* to signify the full flourishing that God desires for humanity.”² We are a threatened *humanum* right now - large segments of our population are threatened and so must we be if we believe we have each been created in the image of God, *imago Dei*, because God desires full flourishing for **all** of humanity.

¹ *Ministry Matters* (online) When Pastoral Anxiety is a Witness, November 11, 2016.

² *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p.130

But especially as threatened humanum there is hope in God. The psalmist, in facing the difficulties of Israel, reminds the people that “God...has done marvelous things,” which is worthy of their, and our, praises. God’s saving acts in the past are worth singing about **and** they give us hope for what God can do here and now. As a foundational piece of my faith, I believe that what God can do here and now is always made richer by the ways I contribute. In our reading from Luke, Jesus says to the disciples that difficult times are coming for the disciples and **through those difficult times** they will be given an opportunity to testify, to testify to the hope in God through difficulty; to testify to God’s desire for the full flourishing of humanity; to testify to Jesus’ saving acts in order that we know what full flourishing can look like, and know our part in it as those who follow Jesus’ lead. By their endurance in these difficult times, they will gain their souls. As I said last week, we are called to be a reconciling people because we were created to be in relationship. That means hard, hard things. That means listening to the person with whom you disagree. That means allowing that their feelings of fear are just as valid to them as your feelings are to you. That means refusing to let the language of hate flourish, **no matter what you think the maligned person or group represents**. How might you do this? You could start by asking this question, “Could you tell me more about what makes you say that?” If we permit hate to be part of how we express disagreement then we simply cannot be a reconciling people. Hate closes any doors to love. I do not quote this glibly: in the words of Yoda from Star Wars, “Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.” These words are true no matter for whom or for what you voted. I may never agree with you but I will not hate you. I want to know what fears you have for our nation, for our community, for your family and friends because I know your fears feel just as real to you as mine do to me. And I trust you will act on your convictions. For me, I have realized there is too much at stake for me not to act on mine. But I won’t give in to fear, as much as I can help it. When it creeps up on me, I will look to Psalm 98 and remember God’s power and from the remembering of God’s power I will take hope. With Gods help, so may it be for you and for me.

Let us pray: Great God, hear our prayers. Calm our fears. Remove from us hate. Let your love flourish. Guide us in reconciliation. All these things we pray in the name of your Son. Amen.