

The Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
November 13, 2016
The Rev. Kara Wagner Sherer

God's vision never changes. No wonder the words of the ancient Hebrew prophets live on and are proclaimed again and again, from Scripture in our places of worship and in our own lives every day. Isaiah proclaims that God is about to create new heavens and a new earth and that the sound of weeping shall no more be heard. God's vision is a world where no infant dies young and every old person lives out a lifetime, a world in which those who labor for their livelihoods enjoy the fruits of their own labor. God's vision is a world where the powerful and the weak eat together, the evil are punished, and no one hurts or destroys.¹

This was God's vision before our recent election. This is God's vision the day after the election. This was God's vision when Israel lived under the reign of King David and when they were conquered and carried away into exile. This was God's vision when the Inquisition burned medieval Europe, when Pol Pot raped Cambodia, when Spain destroyed the Aztec kingdoms, when apartheid poisoned South Africa, when Gandhi starved himself in India, when Hitler's Germany made genocide government policy. This vision of peace and health for all the people of the world was God's vision before 9/11. It was God's vision after 9/11.

This is still God's vision. God is about to create new heavens and a new earth, and the sound of weeping shall no more be heard. God's vision is a world where no infant dies young and every old person lives out a lifetime, a world in which those who labor for their livelihoods enjoy the fruits of their own labor. God's vision is a world where the powerful and the weak eat together, the evil are punished, and no one hurts or destroys.

This is God's vision and this is our work.

On Wednesday morning Laura Singer came by to do some of her volunteer work as president of Hands to Help. We talked about the election results and our disappointment. Laura had just come from her morning run around Horner Park. She said that for the past couple of times she has run by a homeless couple camped out in the park. That morning she stopped and talked to them. They have no income, no state IDs, and yes, they want to get off the streets. Laura took them two sleeping bags, which Karen Hoyer donated just a few weeks ago, a temporary help. They are to meet with a local pastor who has collaborated with Hands to Help to get folks assistance. The results of the election motivated Laura to reach out, to work harder. God's vision has not changed. Our work has not changed.

¹ Isaiah 65:17-25

Theoretically I knew that, whatever the outcome of the election, my work would be the same. Hillary Clinton has lots of rich and influential friends. So does Donald Trump. I knew that they would both need reminding about the poorest, the least, and the oppressed. Had the election turned out differently, I might have become complacent, figuring that there were others stepping up to the plate. It seemed to me that the rhetoric of hate had won; that feeling is a wake-up call. My work has not changed, and I am the only one to do it.

Paul tells the Christians of Thessalonica² that he continued to work as a tent maker so as not to be a burden on them because “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat.” I take this both literally and metaphorically. I enjoy many privileges that I only partially work for—food, clothing, shelter, a good education. I live in a country and a city that offers the privilege of voting, a system of justice, public transportation, leisure time for art and sport and the enjoyment of nature. Am I willing to work for what feeds me and sustains me?

This week I made plans to go to the peaceful protest at the Standing Rock, Sioux Nation Reservation, where members of tribes and other activists from all over this nation are trying to block the Dakota Access Pipeline, which would go through their land, their water supply, and their ancestral graves. People have been protesting every day since July 27. I am going because I believe that God’s vision for this land and its people has not changed and my work is to make that vision a reality.

God’s vision is the same. Our work remains the same. What is God calling you to do concretely to make God’s vision a reality? Do not put off the question and the call. And do not be afraid. In the words of Isaiah that we say and sing today, “Surely it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior. Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation.”³

God’s vision has not changed. Our work has not changed. Go and do it.

² 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

³ Canticle 9, Isaiah 12:2-6