

Sunday March 16, 2025
Second Sunday of Lent

Meditation: "Lament"

Lament. A passionate expression of grief or sorrow. You can almost hear the sorrow in Jesus' voice as you read this passage. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

You can almost hear the same lament today. 'America, America, you used to be the land that welcomed the foreigner and refugee, that stood for justice in the world, and provided for the poor and the marginalized. Now you have closed your doors, and turn away those in need; you side with aggressors against the innocent and demand both thanks and concessions from the victim; you have turned off the tap that provided food and medical aid to millions, and thrown tens of thousands of your own into need.'

That is what happens when a fox comes to political power. The fox with a smooth voice and reassuring promises, with razor sharp teeth concealed behind lips curled in a false smile. Herod was one. His son, Herod was another. The first was in power when Jesus was born. The son was in power at the time of Jesus' ministry. Conniving. Dangerous. With a polished exterior that fools those who look only on the surface. Now the fox rules America, and Russia, and Hungary, and Germany, and the Netherlands, and vies for power in France, and yes, even here in Canada.

Wesley-Knox United Church in Wortley Village spearheaded a resolution to go to General Council this summer. It was signed by fifteen clergy, myself included, and several communities of faith. The resolution seeks to publicly repudiate so called Christian Nationalism, and to offer opportunities for education for interested parties. I say 'so called' Christian Nationalism because 'Christian' is a misnomer. These people are racist, believe in the use of violence to achieve their ends, care nothing for justice or for the vulnerable

or marginalized, and put their nation state ahead everything, including the Kingdom of God. They are the antithesis of everything Jesus stood for. As part of the opportunities for education for interested parties, last Sunday Wesley-Knox held a movie night, with an opportunity for discussion as well. The movie they showed was titled 'God and Country' and was about the rise of Christian Nationalism in the United States. It has been around a long time – at least since the War of Northern Aggression (aka The Civil War), in the time of the KKK, the Moral Majority, the Tea Party, and now, Christian Nationalism. It is about power and control – period, full stop. Those who could get out the vote, the clergy, made a pact with the fox. We'll get you the votes, you put us in power. One side gets the power it lusts for. The other side enriches himself.

As unnerving as the film was, the next night I watched the other film that the Rev. Dr. Rob Apgar-Taylor recommended, 'Bad Faith.' That one kept me awake Monday night. The first movie did a good job at showing the history of the rise of Christian Nationalism. The second showed what they were willing to do to get power, and what they would do with it when they got it.

Remember, we are talking about so-called CHRISTIAN Nationalists. They talk about using violence and guerilla tactics to take power and about destroying the institutions of the democracy. Think the justice system, the Supreme Court, the FBI, the Federal Aviation Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, the Centre for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, Social Security, Nursing Homes, the education system from primary to post secondary institutions, and so on. They want to replace democracy with a theocracy – a theocracy of their own twisted religious beliefs. What has happened south of the 49th parallel is nothing short of what happened in 1979 when the Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah of Iran and turned Iran into a restrictive theocratic state.

I know, right now you are all thinking, thank God I live in Canada. It can't happen here. To which I would say, 'guess again.' The same line of thinking

that brought the fox into power in the US is held by those who launched the trucker protest in Ottawa, who blockaded the US border crossings in Windsor and Coutts, and who spew hatred and divisive politics from our federal parliament.

If we don't want to go down the same path as the Americans, we need to look at how it happened there, to stop it from happening here. Two things put the current president in office. First, voter apathy. Roughly 50% of eligible voters did not cast a ballot. Second, an extremely well organized and well funded minority group got the vote out for their candidate. The rest is history. It is almost exactly the same dynamic that happened in our recent provincial election where 19% of eligible voters put Doug Ford back into office with a majority, with only 45% of all eligible voters casting a ballot. The real majority didn't bother to vote. Now think about this – we have a federal election coming in weeks.

We need to ensure that ALL eligible voters do two things. The first is to take the effort to educate themselves about party platforms. The second is to make the effort to get out and vote. Voting is not a democratic right. It is a democratic responsibility.

As part of the educating ourselves about the dangers of these nationalistic movements that are sweeping democracies everywhere, I propose holding a movie night of our own, right here in DUC, for anyone in Dorchester who is interested. I propose to show 'Bad Faith'. What do you think? Would a Saturday afternoon or a Friday evening or some other day or time be best?

Do you want a little good news and comfort in the middle of all this frightening news? When the fox breaks into the henhouse, do you know what the hen does? That's right, she gathers the chicks and protects them under her wings. Even when the fox gets political power and makes life horrid for countless people, in his/her own country and around the world, the hen still longs to

gather the chicks under her wings and protect them. God is well aware of what is happening and stands waiting to shelter us, if we are willing.