

When The Truth Is Found In a Lie

And just like that, the world has changed once again. An attempt on former President Trump's life has altered the trajectory of our country in ways we don't yet fully understand. It's hard not to feel fear, and panic, and a deep existential concern about the fate of our nation and the fate of the world. This act of violence has injected even more uncertainty and confusion into an already contentious climate. When the news broke, my wife and I both felt the pits of our stomachs contract and our pulses quicken because of what we knew this will do to the fabric of our nation. I don't know what you felt yesterday, but what all the pundits and analysts have said is true. We are living in unprecedented times. We are living in times that change history.

Honestly, I'm tired of living in unprecedented times. It's exhausting. It's exhausting to always be waiting for the other shoe to drop. And it's easy to lose heart and lose hope when everything around us seems to be fracturing or cracking. The plight of those in Gaza worsens every day, and now Damascus is under attack as it endures missiles from Israel. We have crisis upon crisis happening in our world, and this will just make things worse. But, despite our fears and apprehensions, alongside the despair comes this question: "As the people of the risen Christ, how are we going to live in these unprecedented times?"

The reason that this question comes to us this morning is because of who we are and what we have come here to do this morning. We are people, yes, people who feel fear and whose reservoir for hope seems to be running dry. But we are also the people who have gathered here this morning to hear the words of the Lord that are necessary for us to find our footing in this uncertain world. We are the ones who have gathered here this morning around the altar of God to

call forth something beautiful, holy, and life-giving. And that in and of itself feels like a burden, but it is a burden that we cannot shrink away from.

Unprecedented times have been with humanity since there has been a humanity. We have always endured calamity upon calamity, and yet we have found our way forward. It's because people like you and I have been willing to stand up like this to declare that there is more than the horror and chaos we are confronted with. This is David's story, dancing as the ark of God is brought back into the holy city. They were people beset by chaos left and right above and below, and yet, David still found something within him worth celebrating as they brought forth life amidst the ruined battlefields of the Holy Land. His dancing, though, wasn't something that kings usually did. His wife Michal couldn't abide by her husband's frivolity. He wasn't what she expected him to be, and that is where our story meets David's.

This is an hour of history in which we are being called upon to confound the expectations of the world. When things happen that upset an already fragile and delicate balance, it is expected that people will shrink back and operate out of fear and panic. It's expected that we would cling more tightly to our divisions and move through the world while holding tightly to our fear as if our fear is what will save us. But the fear is what keeps us here, keeps us shrinking back from lighting the torches of hope in a world bereft of light and life.

That is not who we are called to be right now. We are not called to use our fear as an unholy blanket of comfort. Like David, and like Paul, we are being called to do something more, to be something more, to inject life into the very heart of our world. Paul, too, was called upon to remain faithful when the Gospel given to him challenged everything around him. But despite antagonism, exclusion, and the real violence done to him, he never wavered in his faithfulness. He still confounded the expectations of all those who came against him. He still found the

courage to write to the people in Ephesus and give them what they needed to keep hope alive. *In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.*

But something else must be acknowledged by me as I preach from a position of comfort and safety. You have the harder job when it comes to spreading hope. It's my job to stand up here and *give* you words of hope. Then, it's your job to take these words of hope and make them *real*. In all the various circumstances in which you live, you are called to make these words of hope jump off the page and make a difference. Classrooms, and offices, and gyms, and waiting rooms, and all the places you find yourself. I don't think I would be doing my job if I didn't remind you of this truth. Yet, I also wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't acknowledge how hard it is to make hope real when you already feel overcome by fear or despair.

But who will keep the flames of hope alive if not you and me? Who will tend to those flames as the winds of chaos and change threaten to blow them out? It falls to us, my beloved. It falls to us whether we like it or not. This morning, we gather around the altar, the center of the universe. But, as one of our prayers says, we gather not just for solace but also for strength. We turn our fears, nightmares, and tears into a holy offering placed before the Risen Christ and hope that what we get in this holy communion will fill us with something else. It's not magic, but it's the best thing we have to offer this morning. And though sometimes it doesn't feel like it's enough, it has kept us strong and steady for this long, and I must trust that it will sustain us during our own hours of desperation.

Hope feels hard on a day like today. But that is when hope is needed the most. To quote writer Mark Russell, "Hope is the lie we make come true." And he's right because everything out

there tells us that hope is not possible, that it is a lie, and that the world cannot be healed and transformed. But, dear people of God, history tells us that perseverance in the face of such challenges will be rewarded. So hope away! Hope that there is a better tomorrow out there. Hope that there is healing waiting in the wings. Hope that you can play a part in calling forth something beautiful amidst the wreckage of our world. The world may tell us our hope is a lie. But we will prove them wrong by making it come true.