I don’t hold grudges. I don’t stay mad. I find it fairly easy to forgive people, particularly people I love, especially when they didn’t intend to cause harm.

I think I’ve shared before that my favorite commandment, and the one that I think is the basis of all the other commandments that govern our relationships with each other, is the 8th commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” In the Small Catechism, this is what Martin Luther has to say about this commandment (emphasis mine): “We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, **and interpret everything they do in the best possible light**.”

Interpreting people’s actions in the best possible light has been a guiding principle of my life for as long as I can remember. I think it’s part of why I don’t hold grudges or stay mad, and why I forgive easily – that, and holding grudges just takes so much energy!

But there’s a downside to this. The downside is that there can be a temptation for me to move on too quickly, to forgive and forget too easily, when real harm has been done, or when there is the chance that real harm could be done. Especially if the threat comes from someone I don’t know, someone across the country or around the world or on the news. Maybe it’s less easy for me to take it seriously.

I had a conversation with someone recently about the state of the country and the concerns that we both share for what the next four years will bring, and that person told me that she has decided she is just not going to think about it because there isn’t really anything she can do about it.

I find myself wondering about that perspective. Is that the right perspective to take? As a Christian, knowing that there will be people that I love, people that you love, who will potentially face discrimination and injustice over the next four years due to their immigration status, their race or ethnicity, their status as a trans person, their socioeconomic status, etc., how am I called to respond?

It’s probably okay that I don’t hold grudges and don’t stay mad. Being mad for the next four years would not be good for me spiritually, mentally, or physically. But that doesn’t mean that I can’t stay alert to the ways in which the world cries out for justice. And that doesn’t meant that I shouldn’t stay alert to the ways – large and small – in which I am compelled to respond.