

Waiting on the World to Change – Part Two

Pamela Rumancik 12-7-14

We are waiting – waiting to see what comes next.

Waiting can be good – as Karen said – a period of opening to wonder; of making space for things to gestate – to grow – to become. Waiting is not static.

In the John Mayer video “Waiting on the World to Change” those waiting on the world to change seem to be disengaged, discouraged, or hopeless. But actually their actions demonstrate a different reality. While it seemed in the beginning that they were just graffiti vandals – talking about how messed up the world they inherited is – making more of a mess, by end – they were acting in unexpected way. They used the skills they had at hand, using their voice through murals and graffiti art in an alternative way. They were waiting, but not passively

Karen’s song today also was about waiting. It offered an image of Mary waiting to give birth, imagining what might come. Pregnancy is a huge metaphor for waiting for something big to happen, new birth, new life, new hope, but without much of an outward sign of what’s actually happening. A woman’s belly is getting larger but we can’t see the miracle of development inside the growing womb.

The world is going to change – in the meantime you need to prepare for that change. You make a space for the baby, buy clothes, pick out a name. You get ready while allowing space and time for growth and change to happen.

This is Christian season of advent so I used the Advent reading from Isaiah talking about the world they imagined would come. A world of peace and justice – where the lion laid down with the lamb and where everyone had what they needed. This is a vision that each of us can welcome and embrace, it is a beautiful hope for the world. The thing which hangs me up is that many Christians are waiting on Jesus – waiting on God to make the world all better.

Rev Dr MLK spoke of the beloved community – a place where every single person mattered – where people were judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. He waited, but he also worked toward that dream.

I watched the Social Action Committee movie the other night – Spies of the Mississippi. It was horrifying in the depth of depravity that the state exhibited order to maintain white supremacy. I learned a few new things that I probably really didn’t want to know.

The state’s spies had passed on the license plate number and description of the car the three young civil rights workers were driving to the police force before they arrived in town. The sheriff was waiting for them. It was planned in advance. The state even had a map showing where and how deeply the young men were buried after they were killed. The state.

Numbing.

But more disturbing yet were photos of the law enforcement preparing to get ready for the civil right activists. They had pictures of cage trucks and armored cars – fitted with fourteen Gatling

guns – pictures of police in riot gear that looked remarkably similar to the images coming out of Ferguson, Missouri in these last few months.

We are waiting. Still waiting. For time of peace and justice for all races. We are still waiting on that vision of Beloved Community that Rev King spoke so eloquently about.

But we are not waiting for God to fix it and make everything all better.

Let me tell you a story about a guy named Saul. It seems it was raining and raining and starting to flood around his house– so Saul starts to pray saying “please save me God!”

Very soon he heard a knock on the door; it was his neighbors offering him a ride to higher ground but Saul said no, no, he would put his trust in the Lord.

Well pretty soon water started coming up to the first floor & Saul was getting worried. Some Police came by in a boat and called out to him, ready to take him to safety.

But no – Saul said no thank you - he was placing his trust in God.

The water kept rising and soon it came over the second floor forcing Saul to scramble out onto the roof. He was really scared now. A helicopter came by and lowered him a rope so he could climb to safety – but no – Saul wouldn’t go. He was still placing his trust in God.

You know what happened... Saul is swept away by the flood waters and when he gets to the pearly gates he asks “why didn’t you save me Lord?”

An exasperated God replies “Saul I sent you a car, a boat, and a helicopter – you have do your part too!”

Whatever divine intervention is coming – it’s only through the work of our hands.

We are waiting for a beloved community; for a world of peace and justice, but are we waiting well? Are we doing our part? Are we growing, learning, and expanding our understanding of the reality of the situation? Are we preparing to welcome a time of real equality – even if that means changing life as we know it?

Because we can. We can change the world, we can make it different. We have the power – what we need is the will.

The Chicago Area Liberal Ministers (CALM) are embarking on a plan of action. It involves visioning, evaluating, learning, training, and making space for real and substantive change. Karen and I are really excited to be here in this place and time in the Chicagoland area. It feels like we are living into the call for change that is going on outside our doors.

We are going to begin with figuring out where we are. What do we have to learn? What intercultural understandings do we have to absorb? We will begin with self-assessment for the ministers – and then expand that to our congregations.

Because a challenge to making real and substantive change is that there are head understandings of the inequities in our society and then there are heart understandings. There are lenses and

blind spots that we have no idea we have. There are assumptions about what is real, what is normal; what can and can't be changed - that we have to face and overcome before we can do the huge and important work of changing society. That's what it will look like to wait - with integrity. To wait in a way that prepares, that engages, that allows for transformation of our society.

We can do it. Nothing important, nothing world changing, nothing that has changed the course of history has ever started by sitting back and accepting the status quo. Waiting - pregnant, expectant, hope-filled waiting - is not passive. It is thoughtful. It is intentional. It is determined.

We are waiting for the world to change - and we are going to participate in making that change with the tools, the influence, the power that is ours to use. We are going to begin with self-evaluation and education - and then move on to systemic and substantive change.

We are going to begin to do that work right here in Hinsdale (& Beverly) and all around the Chicago land area. We are going to take the time to wonder - to look at what is and at what is possible. We are waiting for the world to change - but we are darn sure it's going to happen.

Amen & blessed be.