

Last week we were in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and in 722 BCE they are wiped out by the Assyrians, they are known as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, they are never hear from of of again. This week's reading is from the prophet Isaiah to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Isaiah covers over 200 years of the history of God's people in three parts. The first part, that we are reading from today, is set in the 8th century BCE before Judah is concord by the Babylonians. Second Isaiah is the about 50 years while they are in exile. Third Isaiah takes place when the people return to Jerusalem.

Reading Isaiah 6:1-8

We live in a divided America and if we're going to find our way back to each other, we have to understand and know empathy. We often say we aren't part of the problem, but like Isaiah, we have unclean lips, we have sin. We believe our words and actions create justice, yet we are are part of a system that is unjust for many. We are quick to label "those people" and vilify the ones that disagrees with us, we must remember they too are children of a loving and faithful God. If we are going to find our way back to each other it is Jesus love and forgiveness that will lead us. Surrounding and filling ourselves with the love of the creator of the universe known best in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is our way back to each other.

Isaiah son of Amoz, or "First Isaiah," is one of the eighth-century prophets (along with Amos, Hosea, and Micah). These prophets boldly proclaimed God's word of judgment against the economic, social, and religious discrimination of their time. It is the example these prophets that leads us to call figures like Martin Luther

King Jr. and Maya Angelo prophets—they look out for the vulnerable—the least and the lost. It is this sort of work that Peace Lutheran is doing...you might have seen the tents as you parked. About twenty people from Peace partnered with thousands from our community to raise awareness and money to end homelessness. The sleep out and fundraising are coordinated by Interfaith Outreach. A home is the foundation on which to build a stable, happy and productive life and Peace has been working for years with Interfaith Outreach and also Beacon's Families Moving Forward program. Peace seeks to walk in the footsteps of Isaiah and Jesus as we work on behalf of the vulnerable in our community, country and world.

These things like housing and the high quality children's education Peace is working with in our Bloom partnership—they bring certainty into the lives of vulnerable people. But we all have vulnerability in our lives, much different then not knowing where we will spend the night or get our next meal, but still vulnerability. And it is out of *these* vulnerabilities that we seek to make everything that's uncertain certain. Religion has gone from a belief in faith and mystery to certainty. "I'm right, you're wrong. Shut up." The more afraid we are, the more vulnerable we are, the more afraid we are. This is what last weeks election looked like. Not much discourse or conversation, but a lot of blame. What is our role as Christians? Many of the races were very close, including the presidential contest. Look at the results from some of the counties around us:

- Anoka: 51% Trump and 41% Clinton
- Carver: 53% Trump and 39% Clinton

- Hennepin: 29% Trump and 64% Clinton
- Scott voted 54% Trump and 38% Clinton

Perhaps our's is a leadership role modeling grace and humility—working to rebuild relationships. Hosting conversations about how our Christian faith informs not only our vote but other important decisions. We can both model and learn from respectful conversations—like we are doing today with our discussion about Peace's partnership with Bloom Early Learning and Childcare. We as people of different political parties are working together to make a difference in our community. Granted providing quality education for children isn't the most politically charged of conversations, but it is a starting point for us to learn and model respectful conversations. As we have this conversation and subsequent conversations we ask ourselves how to live as faithful disciples.# Here are a couple of suggestions: 1) read one of the Gospels. You could read the Gospel of Mark in a few hours on a Sunday afternoon or in a week by committing 20 min/day. 2) Read Luther's Small Catechism; it took me about 35 min yesterday. 3) Read through some of the ELCA's social statements on topics like: economics, education, creation care and race. Links are under "About Peace" on our website. 4) Read about Luther's thoughts on the role of government. George Forell has an article that I link to in my sermon on Peace's website.

Martin Luther says the proper role of government # is "the earthly welfare of all" and that Christians are to support their government in carrying out this purpose. Christians are to assure that their children get an education that will

qualify them for government service. It is not enough to know how to complain about the failures of government; one must learn how to help. Finally, Luther said that "every criticism of our government should be understood as a criticism of ourselves." We must start our critical national self-examination with ourselves. Luther's words cut deeply in an election year that put in the national spotlight the subjugation of women, prejudice against non-whites, intolerance of people with different opinions, and a fear of people from other countries and religions, especially Muslims. "Every criticism of our government should be understood as a criticism of ourselves." I don't want to believe that—it is painful to think I play a role in those things—so it must be true.

So what do we do? All the things I said before are good: read the Bible, engage in conversation but we must move into areas of Biblical discomfort. As Isaiah engaged in prophetic truth-telling about the social and economic injustices in his time, we too must make public and clear the role of money and race in America. We are called to stand in the line of Isaiah and Jesus and stand with the most vulnerable—yes those in need of housing and those in need of the services of Bloom Early Learning and Childcare—but there are also conversations we need to have around immigrants, black and brown Americans and Muslims. As Christians we must call for justice.

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If we are going to find our way back to each other it is Jesus' love and forgiveness that will lead us. Surrounding and filling ourselves with the love of the creator of the universe known best in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—is our way.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The arc of history is long but it bends toward justice." Jesus lives. God is loose in the world; calling us into partnership on behalf of the world. And so we say, "Here I am Lord, Send me." Amen.