November 1st, 2020

Springfield Presbyterian Church

I’m Not Even Sure Anymore What Season We Are In.

The 236th Day of March

A Nation Divided

I. Keep it short, Keep it sweet...

 I swore to myself that I wouldn’t preach about the election – but not necessarily for the reasons you might anticipate. I’m tired. I’m tired of the election – I have election fatigue. At this point, for me, it is somewhat about the candidates, but it’s also just about the news media and constant fear and anxiety and anger that is running rampant across our nation.

 And then, completely unintentionally, I somehow placed the story of Jacob and Esau for this date without thinking about its importance for today. If that’s not divine intervention, I’m not sure what is...

II. Brothers

 When I read this passage, I find myself focusing particularly on this idea that two brothers, twins even, who share the same womb, the same culture, the same everything...will be divided. And we see that in our lives, don’t we? We see siblings who may have grown up in the same household and at the same dinner table, but when it comes to looking at this world, the viewpoints could not be more polar opposite.

 And what we see is not simply diversity – diversity in fact should be celebrated, but diversity doesn’t discriminate. Diversity doesn’t put down, doesn’t accuse, doesn’t mock or demean – diversity may be a different way of doing things, but it celebrates difference, rather than demands its own way.

 What we are seeing today is division. I’m not sure if it’s true that we are more divided than ever or if that division has become so predominant in our culture in the last four years. But perhaps that doesn’t matter, perhaps all that matters is that we are a nation divided. And as simple as it sounds, it makes me sad.

 It makes me sad because I believe, with my whole heart, that when we hear in the New Testament that there is no longer Jew nor Greek, I also believe that this division should not continue to divide us. As children of God, made in the image of God, born from this Abrahamic tradition as well, we are better together, than divided.

III. Election Day

 Now, whatever you do, do not assume that this sermon is about who you should vote for, although I do encourage you to vote your conscience. This sermon is more about looking at these two brothers from long ago, whose generations would continue to divide and nation would rival against nation. This sermon is about saying that division is implicit in our human nature, but also not what God has deemed worthwhile, meaningful, or loving.

 If I could offer you any plea today, it would be a plea for peace. It is a plea for nation against nation to simply put down their swords for a moment and see their joint humanity. It’s a plea that we respect one another, the diversity of thought, and for goodness sakes, can we just lay it down for a day, can we just find peace for a moment, can we find God in each other.

 It is the plea of my heart, but I also know that I struggle myself with this, because I’m human. Sometimes the diversity of thought is actually discrimination, sometimes it is a matter of injustice, sometimes it’s more than a

difference of opinion, it’s a matter of moral and ethical integrity. I’ll be honest, sometimes I’ll see signs for a candidate I don’t like or actions taking place in government that upset me and I’ll think some not so kind things. I don’t think I’m alone there. I’ve felt my blood pressure go up, I’ve felt the swell of tears behind my eyes, and I’ve felt the anguish rise. Again, I think this is a human response, I don’t want to make it sinful...I just don’t think the feelings have helped me find any peace or unity in these times.

IV. Division vs. Diversity

 Is it possible, wildly possible, that we can inhabit the Kingdom of God here today? Yes, that is the promise; that is the covenant that overflows from generation to generation. Even though we see Jacob and Esau in their division alongside the division in our own families, maybe there is space and room for us to grow and to grow together. What if we put down the sword and picked up the plowshare, what if we listened to one another and didn’t have to agree, and what if we were able to express our own views without being demeaned?

 I think it’s possible. It may not feel that way, especially this year with all that has gone on from the Coronavirus to this election to racial discrimination and protests and riots. But, if I believe in God, if I witness to the entirety of Scripture, and if I look at history, I have to believe also that the days of peace will come. I must have hope, I must work towards a more peaceable time, and be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

V. Prayer

 My prayer for you this week, above all, is for peace. This is no doubt a hard week, no matter where your politics align, the anxiety and the outrage and the fear can be felt in the air. So simply, I pray for peace, peace of mind, peace of heart, peace that you might get some sleep in the midst of it all. I pray that no matter how this all plays out, that we will find the humanity in one another. I pray peace, upon peace, upon peace.

 Perhaps you would like to join in that prayer with me this week. Perhaps we believe in an unbelievable peace and we join with God to try to create and craft that in our hearts and in the hearts of others. If you need to get angry, get angry, if you need fury, yell out, but I hope at night when you turn off the lights, you come back to peace. May the God of peace, hope, and joy surround us especially this week and guide us in our thoughts and actions as we seek to be the children of God alive and at work in the world. Amen.