

Dear Friends,

Time again for my annual grumpy old man rant. It's not about staying off my lawn or about kids are lazy because back in my day... It is about how we as mainline congregations have lost the journey. For our evangelical brethren, it is all about getting to heaven and that personal relationship with Jesus. For the mainline churches, we have become enamored with buildings, programs, and the UCC social justice. We have moved closer and closer to universal salvation which is a very good thing. We have focused on the God of Love and let go of the nemesis Satan/Devil/Beelzebub. In letting go of the threat of Hell, we have also let go of some of the rituals, traditions, and stories that could fortify and feed us in our trials and tribulations against the power and principalities of racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and white Christian patriarchal nationalism.

The story of Jesus' last week in Jerusalem is filled with politics, contrasting views of religion and who it is for, who should have power and who should be subject to it, winning the crowds, how to lay a foundation for a better world, and how to meet violence with something better. It's also about finding common ground with those we oppose and the things that can pull the closest of allies apart.

The journey each year of Ash Wednesday through Easter is an invitation to explore how our faith is lived out in all its highs and lows and everything in between. It is an invitation to reflect where our church is and where the 'CHURCH' is in its relationship to the Romanesque Empire and to the poor of the land. It is an invitation to reflect on our journey as individuals and families to see what fruits of the Spirit we are growing and ways we are contributing to powers and principalities that bully, dominate, and eliminate life on our planet.

Maybe the Lenten story and resurrection does not help us and speak to us in our modern world. Maybe it needs to be reinterpreted and rewritten. But we need a story, that we can tell, examine, and live, otherwise the capitalistic story of those who die with the most toy wins, because that is how our society functions right now. Bill Gates owns the most farmland in the US, and is buying up gobs of farmland Africa. Elon Musk is going to space with his personal spaceship and controlling more and more of our worldwide communications. Jeff Bezos is worth hundreds of billions of dollars and we don't really know what his plan is but to continue to make more money. Donald Trump is a charlatan who only cares about himself, yet somehow speaks to tens of millions in our country and they believe all his lies.

Is all seem lost? Is there no hope? Is the only way to win is to be as violent and divisive as those we oppose? What story do we tell? What story do we follow...

Peace