

The Choice

At the risk of sounding overly dramatic, we will live together, or we will die together.

As a country, we have just lived through what was arguably the most divisive four years in recent memory. The divisions did not just suddenly appear four years ago, and they have not just suddenly disappeared with the change of administration. But following the example of our past leadership, it seems we as a society have doubled down on the adversarial model as a way to fix our problems. If that continues, we choose to die together.

We don't have to look far for evidence to support this dark prediction. Because legislators in Congress have operated oppositionally, economic help for people has been scarce during the pandemic and businesses have died. Because politics has pitted people against each other regarding science, our planet is dying because of climate change and pollution. Because belief in the pandemic has been used as a litmus test regarding whose side people are on, people die daily of Covid-19 when preventative measures taken as a society could help.

The battle against each other seems to take all our energy and focus and time when we try to accomplish something. We say "If we could only get our person in that power position, then we could do something good." Having a legislative majority or being able to simply sign an executive order gives us the sense that we can easily "git er done." But we use these short term victories to perpetuate the illusion that we can do it (whatever "it" is) ourselves, without the other half of the population. We deny the fact that it will only be together that we find true lasting life.

We (not just "they") are sorely in need of personal and societal conversion if we are to live (rather than die) together. This change will require us to place our trust in relationship with each other rather than in expediency, power, and control in order to live well. This is a huge challenge since our culture lives and breathes in an atmosphere of power and control. Building relationship and trust with "the other" can even make someone suspect in their own circle. Case in point, Joe Biden is already drawing criticism from some on the left for being too willing to build relationships with some on the right.

It seems we have a built-in lack of faith in the power of relationship. It is messy, it takes a lot of work and time, the results are not always immediate and obvious, and of course, we all have been hurt in relationships before. But most of Jesus' work was to invite people to relationship. It is no wonder that some of Jesus' most challenging statements had to do with being in relationship with our adversaries, e.g. "love your enemies," and "turn the other cheek." His message did not consist of a list of specific things to accomplish in order to find life or build the reign of God. It was all about being in relationship with each other, through respect, compassion, caring, sacrifice, sharing, and forgiveness – in short, love.

Our most important work as Christians may be to proclaim through words and actions that we are all in this together, and to work to help people come together as one.

We will live together, or we will die together. We do not get a choice about the “together” part. We do get a choice about the “live or die” part.

Garry