

**ISAIAH 12:2-6 Life after Trump.bn.13.11.16**

Well it's almost old news. Donald Trump is the new president of the United States. How did that result affect you?

In the USA, there was - and still is - a very mixed reaction. The Trump supporters were jubilant. The Hilary supporters were dismayed. In fact, they have been far more than dismayed - there have been protests in the streets! But then that's the down side of a democracy, isn't it? - Your preferred candidate may not win!

Social Media has been buzzing with posts and comments since the result of the US election was decided. Everyone has had an opinion!

Amongst my Facebook connections, there have been many negative comments about the result of the election. In fact I've been quite aghast at the vehemence of some of them. The comments have expressed horror, anger, distress - and quite predominantly - fear!

There are those who fear that racism and discrimination will be encouraged. There are those who fear a financial collapse. There are those who fear that Trump's inexperience and hotheadedness will be the cause of international conflict. Some have predicted he won't last long before he's assassinated; some even believe Trump will cause WW3 and we'll all be obliterated. Charming!

Every now and then though, the Christians that inhabit Facebook post comments that are the voice of reason and encouragement and it has been refreshing to see.

**As Christians, what should our response be to political events that unsettle the world?**

Unfortunately, it's not difficult to hear the opinions around us so often, that we begin to be swept along by them. It's not difficult to pick up undercurrents or fear or unrest and be affected by them.

If we begin to be unsettled in any way - we need to turn back to the Scriptures.

It's amazing how often the set lectionary readings have something powerful to say in the face of world events. Today is one of those times.

Listen to the words of Isaiah from the Song of Isaiah, which we read in place of the psalm this morning:

‘Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and will not be afraid; For the Lord God is my strength and my song: And has become my salvation.’

Formerly, Isaiah had had very little to sing to sing about - we are all familiar with the sad fortunes of God’s chosen people. So often they suffered punishment for their rebellion - from conquest to exile.

In the chapter that precedes this song, God reveals to Isaiah his promise of the coming Christ. He reveals to Isaiah the character, governance and nature of the kingdom of Christ - and I can just imagine Isaiah sitting there on his rock, tuning in to what God says to him: “REALLY? You mean there will be an end to all this? you’re going to fix everything? Oh wow!” and it causes Isaiah to burst into a song of praise and confidence in God.

Here it is again: ‘Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust and will not be afraid; For the Lord God is my strength and my song: And has become my salvation.’

As Christians, our confidence also rests in God. Regardless of who is at the head of the dominant world power, GOD is our strength and our might. GOD is our salvation. There is no need to fear - not even Donald Trump, or Hilary Clinton, if she’d got in.

Can we rest easy then? Put up our feet and relax, knowing that everything will be fine - as we reflected on last week?

Well - yes and no.

**Yes**, in that in the eternal scheme of things, we know that God will return in glory. Everyone will see it happen - and he will bring in his Kingdom once and for all. Isaiah talks about this kingdom in our Old Testament reading:

He describes a stunning new earth & heavens - SO different from what we know here & now:

Using familiar earthly images, he describes it as a place where we won’t ever be overwhelmed with grief; little babies won’t die, and adults will live long and happy lives; there will never be a shortage of food; there won’t be exploitation or war - and we have that lovely image of the end of all conflict: the lion lying down next to the lamb.

Isaiah paints a picture of a place without the sadness, want and conflict that characterise our present earth - he describes a place of peace, rest and plenty, where we will dwell in the presence of God, and where we will know him so intimately, that we will experience God hearing us before we speak, and answering us before we call!

He's not speaking literally of course - although such a kingdom was fulfilled in part after the people returned from exile - he is speaking prophetically of the wonderful new kingdom that will be heralded by Christ's return.

**So yes** - in a sense we can relax, knowing that everything will be fine.

But in another sense, **no, we can't**. We still need to be on our guard. We can't relax completely.

Why?

Because Jesus warned us that things would get worse before they got better.

Have you ever been injured, or had surgery, and then been referred to a physio? I was referred to a physio after I had a hang gliding accident in my younger days. I will never forget it - not the accident, the physio! I damaged my elbow and it was SO painful! And then I had to have physio....the doctor said cheerily, as he handed over a referral, "it will get worse before it gets better, but it will get better."

He wasn't kidding....

The point of that little story isn't that the earth is receiving physio - I'm being a little middle-eastern in my imagery here....rather the point is that things will get worse before they get better.

This is what Jesus tells us: "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first but the end will not follow immediately." Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name."

When I lived in Goulburn, I was invited to a talk about the end times by a fringy church group. I was curious, so I went. I'm sure they were rubbing their hands in glee at the thought of a new convert - and an Anglican at that! We were presented with a rather graphic and spectacular video which outlined the wars and disasters that the world had seen so far, essentially matching each one to a passage in Scripture, checking off each event, and predicting that when the last event had been ticked off, Christ would come. They were even bold enough to suggest that they had a fair idea when this would occur.

I don't believe that is how we should interpret the Scriptures. Jesus himself said that no-one knows the day or hour when he will return. But he did say that when we see blossoms on a tree, we know spring is coming. In the same way as we see the things he predicted happening around us, we know that his return is imminent. However, imminent to us, and imminent to God may not be the same thing. We're told, "A day is as a thousand years to God, and a thousand years is as a day..." That's in 2 Peter.

These things have been happening since the time of Christ, and they will continue to happen all through this in-between time until he returns. Bad things may happen under the leadership of America's new president. Or they may not.

We don't know the blueprint of events before the return of Jesus, but we do know that there will continue to be conflict and strife and persecution and natural disaster, as this world winds it's inevitable way towards judgement.

So we cannot let down our guard. We must continue to be vigilant and remain faithful to our Lord.

How do we do that?

1. In this same passage, we are warned that there will be imposters who might lead us astray, and we must not be taken in by them. To do this, we need to know the Lord, we need to stick with the believers and hold fast to the truth of the Scriptures

2. We might be put on the spot and have to give an account of our faith. Perhaps some of us have experienced that? Jesus promises us that he will give us the words to say.

3. We are warned to expect persecution. We are fortunate in Australia to be able to express our faith reasonable freedom, but it is not so in other places. If you live in parts of Indonesia right now, it is downright dangerous to be a Christian. You could lose your life. Jesus encourages us to remain faithful. He says, in v18, "But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls." We shouldn't read that at being necessarily offered physical protection. Christians do experience martyrdom - and we will no doubt continue to do so until Christ returns. Rather, the promise is that our endurance will insure that we will be with Jesus at the end of it all.

So, back to the question I began with: **As Christians, what should our response be to political events that unsettle the world?**

We should respond with:

\* **trust in God**, not allowing ourselves to be swayed by the winds of earthly opinion;

\* **faithfulness in living for Jesus**, even if the going gets tough at times

\* and we should respond with **praise & thanksgiving**, regardless of who wields political power, regardless of the things that might be unfolding around us - in anticipation of the coming of Christ's kingdom in all its fullness.

Let's pray.