

Everyone in this room remembers exactly where they were and what they were doing on this morning ten years ago today.

I was at the dentist's office. The attack had not occurred when I got up in the morning and listened to the news on the radio. I fixed my lunch, ate breakfast, took my shower, got dressed and went to the dentist for a routine checkup and tooth cleaning. It was in the waiting room that I saw that the first plane had struck the tower. We were all shocked- is shocked the right word? We were so deeply, numbly unbelievably struck dumb, that we all just continued on with our business. I was shown into the [work] room and seated in the chair, which was tipped back so that I could see the TV screen where my unbelieving eyes watched as the second plane struck the second tower. Watched it, just as it was happening, right then as I was watching it, knowing that I was seeing it at about at the same time as the President or the head of the CIA.

And the hygienist went ahead and cleaned my teeth! We both watched each other feeling our world unravel, as this bizarre tragic drama unfolded, and felt our world unravel- and talked with each other as she cleaned my teeth.

As the days progressed, it unfolded that we were now in a War on Terror with an org called Al Qaeda and a man named Osama bin Laden neither of which I had ever heard of until I heard G. Bush say their names.

*[pause]*

This unfolding of our War on Terror gradually, for me, carried over and got folded into a larger more embracing Terror which already included climate change, over population, starvation, and poverty; but which came to include the seemingly increasing number of Natural Disasters such as Katrina and then escalated as the Economy took its nosedive- a dive which continues to this day and which we may not have seen the bottom of.

So now, ten years to the day after 9/11, we are still in harm's way in Afghanistan- and Iraq!- unemployment rages unabated, as do the droughts and wildfires that never seem to stop now, the Washington Monument is damaged not by terrorists but by an Act of God, inland Vermont is flooded by a hurricane, Japan is barely recovering from its earthquakes and tsunami, same with Haiti; whole countries, like Greece- the cradle of democracy and philosophy and modern civilisation- facing bankruptcy . . .

Meanwhile, incredible wealth is accumulating at the top of our global staggering economy. The Rich are getting even Richer. Something like  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the money in the world is controlled by the top 1-5% of the population. And some of these people are the same ones who helped get us into this incredible economic situation, getting high on the profits of mortgage backed securities- mortgages on houses built during the "bubble," McMansions built so badly that they are now, abandoned, not worth the land they are built on. But we also helped get ourselves into this mess, believing and investing in the myth of the ever-escalating value of houses.

Mix in with this the also seemingly endless stream of hate crimes, mass murders, shooting rampages and other forms of human insanity. Like the guy who just shot up the IHOP. who apparently chose his site at random. Gabrielle Giffords, Amish children, Norway . . . the list is endless.

Even Arab Spring- which can be seen as a movement of hope, of the possibility of freedom in the long-oppressed Middle East- can also go the other way and turn into the agent of

persecution for Coptic Egyptians and other minorities.

Are you feeling anxious? Confused? Maybe even a little irritated with me for describing a world that is unraveling, continues to unravel, with no end in sight?

Friends. Bear with me for a moment longer. Imagine with me for a moment that- there truly is *no end in sight*. Imagine that the economy is not going to improve, regardless of whose plan gets put in place; gas prices will continue to fluctuate upward, global warming and natural disasters continue, human insanity . . . it all goes on and on.

Where I am going with this? I am NOT heading toward apocalypse. Humans- including lots and lots of Christians- have been looking at their historical circumstances and predicting that The End Is Near throughout history. In fact we just passed through one such prediction, in the form of the Rapture event.

Why does each generation think that it is The Last? Because, from a religious perspective, the world is burning, has always burned, and always will burn. Call it Sin, Evil, Greed, Hatred or Delusion- what is wrong with the world today is what has always been wrong with the world.

I do not speak from the apocalyptic tradition, but from another prophetic tradition. One that says that the end is near because the end is always near. One that says that Chaos is normal in all its forms, including natural disaster, genocide, and economic collapse. History is, by and large, the story of this Chaos: conquest and empire, including Roman rule in the time of Jesus (and the tyranny of the Pharisees.) Plagues. Slavery and the Colonial Era. World Wars. The Holocaust.

[This world also includes water so blue it does not look real and trees so big you cannot begin to get your arms around them. It includes friends and family, campfires and cats curled up in your lap . . . buttercups and honeybees.] But in this world our trees are threatened by everything from acid rain to emerald borers; our friends and family are threatened by unemployment; and honeybees are threatened with Colony Collapse Disorder.

This prophetic tradition proclaims that the solution to our problems does not lie anywhere within History.

*This tradition says that the Lord is always and forever our only refuge.*

I am not saying that we should not try to make this world a better place. I am reminding us in this Meeting for Worship that ultimately, finally, eternally, it is the Kingdom of Heaven that we seek; that time and place where, finally, God rules by not ruling; where Love is the only law we need, where Faith replaces belief, and where our Hope is not in the future or even in a heaven where you go when you die. But in God's Eternal Presence in the Here and Now.

This tradition reminds us that even though we seem to be walking through the valley of the shadow of death, *we will fear no evil, for Thou art with us*. This decade just past proclaims loud and clear that there is no getting back to the "way things were." We can take this anxiety, uncertainty, and confusion and turn it into moral clarity, based on the very ground of morality itself.

Join with me now as flowers open and honeybees awaken and Terrorists drive airplanes into towers and psychotics shoot children, as we pray to the Infinite Love of our anxious and confused hearts: For the buzzing blooming money grubbing trigger pulling buttercup of Creation- we remember now to Thank You. And tomorrow, when we forget again, lead us back to your still waters, restore our souls, and remind us again.