And so we pray…

I have a confession to make. I didn’t vote for either President- Elect Donald Trump or for former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. I voted for a third party candidate. And yes, I also realize many would say I am to blame for not helping one of the two major parties win the election. But I thought that was why we allow third parties to run – so that there is another choice.

Now, as I survey the aftermath of this election - the sad and angry posts on Facebook, the media astonishment and rhetoric about why, the headlines full of fear and foreboding and even protests on a college campus, I am reminded of what we may have forgotten if we hold Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Jesus knew about leaders who weren’t always honest or kind. Jesus knew about living under oppression. Jesus knew about late night trials, corrupt judges and witnesses with false claims. Jesus knew the feeling of standing alone and under attack by those who used to pretend to smile and invite him to dinner. And yet, he didn’t curse them or embarrass them. He didn’t run away or try to fight. Jesus lived out his words on how to live that he offered to us as we face a hostile world.

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.” (Luke 6:32-35 )

It seems we are to extend goodness and lend what is needed without expecting a great return. We are to love our enemies, whichever party they may belong to, and pray for those who may persecute us- praying for their welfare and their good. For the Most High is kind to ungrateful and wicked folks, even people like us.

It’s not an easy solution but Jesus never said picking up the cross and following him was easy. He said quite the opposite. We must count the cost. What will it cost me to love those of the opposite political party? What will it cost me to not say or post mean or angry things? What will it cost me to love these other people I don’t agree with? What will it cost me to stop bashing others – either in a private or in a public way? What will it cost me to live in a country where my political party is not in power?

And if we agree that the Apostle Paul was a man of God we are also to “be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle and to show every courtesy to everyone” (Titus 3:1-2 ).

This is hard work! We don’t agree with each other and we think the other is evil or worse. How can we ever be obedient? How can we ever avoid quarreling? How can we show every courtesy to everyone?!

To be like Jesus means we must see the eternal picture and not just the present picture. Jesus was looking at eternity and the glory God had for him, the joy of being with the Father again – not just the pain, shame and horror of the cross that lay ahead. He knew God had something more and that the Kingdom was at hand, regardless of what the executioners would do. He knew God was the God of life and resurrection was and is real.

Jesus also didn’t hide the fact that there would be dark days, wars, persecution, and the like. All this would take place. But we aren’t to be the persecutors or take part in the darkness! We are to be the light, the ones who bless and don’t curse, who are to live love, joy, peace, patience, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) no matter who is in the White House!

So maybe we need to pray. Maybe we need to quit writing on Facebook or Instagram or letters to the editor until we have spent time re-reading those words of Jesus and asking him how we can live that way. Maybe we need to take a look at what God is doing – or wants to do – and see where we can be God’s help on this earth sowing seeds of love and hope and joy. No political party needed! Maybe if we get busy proclaiming the Kingdom of God and the glory of Jesus, we will see the place we live come alive with the miracles Jesus promised. Maybe we will then walk in the light of God’s love and grace.

I invite you to stop and pray with me now: Holy One who created all that we can see and can’t see, this world, this nation, this people needs your help. Bless you Lord God for loving us despite our angry and hurtful ways. We are sorry for how we have hurt others and you. We are grateful for your forgiveness in and through Jesus and for calling us to something more and better and brighter. Thank you that you are God and we are not. Thank you for showing us this day how to love in word and deed and to be Jesus’ followers sharing with those in need and lifting up those knocked down and offering love even to those whom we dislike. Thank you for being Lord even over the President of the USA and we lift this change of government to you. May they all see their higher calling and know you are Lord of heaven and earth and that they are not. May they look to you for the help they need in the coming weeks, months and years. We pray that we might be more like you Jesus every day as we pray this prayer in your name.