



Sermon on November 13th, 2016, Rev. J. Cooper Conway

*One last time – relax and have a drink with me.
One last time – let's take a break tonight
And then we'll teach 'em how to say good bye
We'll teach 'em how to say good bye – you and I.*

That's a little tune from the show "Hamilton" by Lin Manuel Miranda. Washington sings it to his protégé Hamilton while he is breaking the news that he will be stepping down from the presidency after only two terms.

Of course Hamilton thinks Washington is mad. He's still strong. He's still well regarded.

But Washington knows better – a precedent must be set; the good of the nation cannot rest on any individual ---the nation itself must be strong to endure. This "good bye" message is part of our nation's DNA.

In this morning's Gospel, Luke gives us a scene where people are wandering around the temple admiring its beauty. But Jesus brings them up short when he says "The time is coming when every stone in that building will wind up in a heap of rubble."

In other words "the good of God's people cannot rest on the symbol of a beautiful temple," the people themselves must be strong to endure. In fact, Jesus goes on to tell his listeners (that after the fall of the temple) "you'll be called up to testify [but] I will give you the words and wisdom to reduce your accusers to stammerers..." soooooo ...once the temple is down the people's strength will be provided by God and they will be led by God. That is today's message.

It has been a turbulent week. The election on Tuesday came as a surprise to most, for some it was a happy result and for others...not.

There are citizens who believe that our president-elect will lead us to great things and most all of us hope that is true. And there are citizens who are very afraid of what a Trump leadership will mean for our national prosperity and safety and for the safety of our most vulnerable neighbors.

But as Americans, we have been taught to hope because we have been taught how to say good bye. It is a part of our national DNA and it has served us well.

*One last time – relax and have a drink with me
One last time – let's take a break tonight
And then we'll teach 'em how to say good bye
We'll teach 'em how to say good bye – you and I.*

Now, on Wednesday, our president addressed the nation and he told us this:

*"We are not Republicans first
We are not Democrats first
We are Americans first"*

In other words, we believe in the peaceful transfer of power. We know how to say good bye, it is in our DNA.

So of course, Mr. Obama is right (as far as it goes.)

But I say to you, this:

"We are not Republicans first

We are not Democrats first

We are not even Americans first

ALWAYS REMEMBER WE ARE CHRISTIANS FIRST".

We are experts on saying good bye because we answer to a higher power and we know that when the rubber hits the road and we are called upon to testify...if we listen, God will provide us with "the words and wisdom that will reduce our accusers to stammerers."

In the first letter to Timothy, the author advises Timothy to "pray for the civil authorities that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all goodness and honesty." Now according to commentaries, "quiet" here refers to tranquility from outside disturbance while "peaceable" refers to tranquility which comes from within." So then prayer for government acts both on the governors and also on us the citizens resulting in peace both without and within.

As Christians, we have a dual role as beneficiaries of God's peace and also as its agents. That puts us in a position of strength and it helps us in the work of saying good bye. Further, the strength of Peace allows us to see truth and name it when we need to.

So, although our election is over, the work of peace is not done. This is what lies before us:

First: we will say good bye

Then: We will pray for our government

And: We will remain vigilant

In order to act in fellowship with our neighbors.

These are our four tasks and they are part of our DNA as Christian Americans:

Saying good bye – praying for government – being vigilant – and acting in fellowship.

Catherine of Sienna put it this way:

Let nothing upset thee

Nothing a freight thee

All things are passing

God never changeth

Patient endurance to all things attaineth

In whom God possesseth nothing is lacking.

.....

One last time – relax and have a drink with me.

One last time – let's take a break tonight

And then we'll teach 'em how to say good bye

We'll teach 'em how to say good bye – you and I.