

## **"The Next President of the U.S."**

Rev. Dick Dutton

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Well here we go again. On October 28, 2012 I preached a sermon entitled "The President of the United States", and sure it was quite profound. It dealt of course with the choice between Obama and Romney. I suggested you vote for the one who most strongly supported the Biblical concept of "I was hungry and you gave me meat, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, Inasmuch as you did it unto one the least of these my brother, you did it unto me." That was eight years ago.

Then on October 23, 2016 the week before that election I made an awful mistake, I decided not to preach a sermon on "The Next President of United States... and the choice between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump that was a horrible mistake. So this morning I'm not going to make the same mistake. I am going to help you make a decision about the person you want to be President of the United States.

Some Of you have read Doris Kearns Goodwin's latest book entitled: *Leadership in Turbulent Times*. In that very contemporary volume, she profiles four United States presidents... FDR, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson. And she highlights four leadership characteristics: humility, empathy, resilience, and availability. I have chosen two of them and mor... Humility, empathy, Integrity, and trust.

When it comes to humility, most of us remember the lines... "Have you read my latest book, Humility and how I Attained It?" But humility is serious stuff. Think of the-world leaders and famous men and women, they were all men and women Of great humility... Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Thich Nhat Hanh, Harriet Tubman, Mother Teresa, Marian Anderson. And for many, the most profound and memorable picture of Jesus of Nazareth is not the crucifixion, or the resurrection but Jesus with a towel and a basin of water, washing his disciple's feet... "Now that I have washed your feet you ought also to wash one another's feet". We are called to the servant role. And I think that one of the main reasons men women turn away from the Christian tradition and choose to be called 'Spiritual' is because it's too hard to be a servant, or desire to wash another's feet. Ours is a generation of everyone seeking self-fulfillment, my needs, my desires, my happiness. But the irony is that my greatest happiness comes when I'm giving to others, when I'm being a little bit of a servant to my brother and sister.

Recently I decided it was time to re-read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. We know it written 50 years ago, an amazing transformative book... that brought the country to focus on the destruction that DDT and other chemical use are causing our world... air, water, soil, birds, fish, animals, and the human species as well. And one of the major themes Rachel Carson calls us to is, rather than arrogance and egotism, in regard to nature we need a little bit humility.

Then their' s Empathy. The opposite of Schadenfreude, the German word meaning enjoyment of another's misfortune. But empathy is more than sensitivity, more than

compassion, it is certainly these, and beautiful with compassion, But it also involves our being open to the thoughts and concerns of others... listening, really listening to the opinion of another with whom we may disagree.

Jim is in our men's group, 5 of us are left-wing progressives, Jim considers himself to be a right wing progressive. We disagree mainly on Trump but also on economic policy and gun control. But Jim and the rest of our group gets along famously, through our disagreements, sometimes heated disagreements, because of our mutual empathy... In fact, we would admit that we love each other. So; empathy is compassion, empathy is respect, empathy is open mindedness, and sometimes empathy may even be love... towards someone with whom you disagree.

If there is one human trait you and I desperately need in the midst of the Coronavirus, especially knowing with over 60,000 deaths in United States, and almost everyone of us knowing someone getting the virus or dying from it, we need from the top, an all-over sense of empathy.

Few of us will ever forget President Obama at the memorial service at the AME Zion church In Charoltsville, South Carolina, his weeping with members of the congregation, his sharing in the Memorial Service for the nine people at that Church service, the sharing of his grief, his sadness with the congregation. And then Obama singing Amazing Grace, as a part of the black church tradition... Talk about empathy!

When we talk about integrity we can certainly begin, and maybe end, with the 10 Commandments. The first five commandments deal with Mankind's relationship to God and family. The second five are all dealing with personal integrity... "Thou shall not kill, thou shall not commit adultery, thou shall not steal, thou should not covet" ... No presidential candidate is going to bat 1000 here, but we hope that our choice for the leader of the free world, and maybe the world's greatest democracy... our hope and even prayer, is that the occupant of the White House will strongly represent a striving towards a consistent integrity.

And in Jesus' day in Palestine, the Pharisees were the greatest group lacking integrity of all times. Listen to what Jesus says about them:

"Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites  
... for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin  
... and have omitted the weightier matters of the law.  
judgment. mercy and faith."

"Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees. hypocrites for ye  
make clean he outside of the cup and of the plater ...  
but within are full of extortion and excess "

Wow! Talk about lacking integrity...

According tradition, there is memorable incident from the life of the renowned Emperor: Alexander the Great. At the conclusion of one of the military battles, when Alexander was the commander, one of his soldiers turned coward and ran away from

the battle. He was later apprehended and brought before the emperor himself. Seeking to make an example of this coward, Alexander began to question the young man. "What is your name, soldier?" "Sir, my name is Alexander." Then in a storming rage: "Tell me your name, soldier!" "My name is Alexander." Unable to maintain his composure any longer, the great emperor of the then known world, thundered, "Soldier, change your name or change your character!"

I asked several friends what was the characteristic that they thought should be a mark of the President of the United States ... they suggested a moral backbone flexibility, sense of humor. But almost all of them came down on this singular quality... TRUST!

So, trust is vitally important, nothing is more important in human relationships than trust between parents and trust between spouses... Trust between friends. And even between newly formed acquaintances. Trust is also the basis and essential connection between us and our basic institutions in America and around the world. The Gallup poll recently listed basic institutions and where they were with levels of trust. Some surprising and others not. The highest trust level was the military at 74%, the police at 54%, churches and religions at 38%, the presidency at 37%, and the supreme court at 37%, banks and public schools at 29%, TV news at 20% and Congress at 11%. Trust is the common denominator for all of our relationships with people and with institutions. A story of trust: His mother called him, "Stephen come here", "sure mom", he put down his video game controller and ran into the living room. Surprised to see his mom and a policeman there. The policeman was holding the bike that Stephen had gotten for Christmas, he said: "Is this your bike son?" "It looks like mine" Stephen said. "I left it at the end of the block". The policeman said: "that's where I found it". "Someone started a fire nearby and some neighbors saw you playing there." "We were playing when we saw these older boys, they looked kind of mean so we left. I must've left my bike there" "I didn't start any fire". He thought; what if the policeman doesn't believe me... The policeman looked at Stephen's mother and asked: "does Stephen always tell the truth?". She said Stephen has never lied to me. if he said he didn't start the fire he didn't." Several hours later the policeman found the older boys who started the fire. Stephen said, I'm glad you believe me when I said I didn't start the fire". "I knew you didn't" she said, "you've always told me the truth". Stephen said it felt good to be trusted, a feeling I always wanted to have!

"He who does not trust enough will not be trusted". "Trust is the fruit of relationships in which you know you are loved."

Trust is a beautiful thing... whether within the family... among friends...with institutions... with our national leaders...our presidents...trust may be the key. So, when you vote, you want to choose one who exemplifies humility, and empathy, and integrity, and finally trust.