

SERMON by Rev. Peaches Gillette

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REPAIR

Before I begin, I must make it clear that I see no one as my enemy. No matter who you voted for this election, I see you through the lens of love and respect. Now, let's talk about this mess.

Our theme for this month is repair, but my focus is the mixed sentiments people are presently feeling about the presidential election. The theme of repair is still relevant, but it also feels insufficient. What I have to say this morning has to include so much more to sincerely address what has happened and how we choose to react and respond.

Is it repair that our hearts and psyches are aching for, perspective, perhaps recovery, or both?

Do we need something to uplift our spirits and restimulate our hopes, or do we just need a moment to mourn, to regroup?

We are worn and threadbare by our experiences with our serratedness - emotionally frayed as we witness the world around us splitting and revealing its latest iteration of tragic disrepair. The election made so many of us feel unraveled.

This past week has ushered in a sense of despondency. Many of us have sunken into disbelief, worry, and despair that we have never experienced; many have experienced this throughout their longer, insightful lifetimes.

The idea of reading the casual plans of a president that will disrupt and socially, emotionally, economically, and politically ravage so many lives is reprehensible. These plans are the reckless behavior of a despot, wielding the sword of hate and indifference, invigorated by moral depravity and an unleashed need for vicious control.

On one hand, we have been building ourselves up for a democratic victory. On the other hand, in the dark recesses of our thoughts, some of us prepared for this governmental leadership debacle by recalling all of Trump's infamous promises (threats, really) that were creeping along the horizon like a ravenous monster eager to pounce and devour more —so here we are.

As we sort through our fears, disappointments, and morbid projections—sort through the onslaught of news commentaries and headlines designed to bring us some semblance of truth and

reality—we become aware that these things also serve to make us angry. We are often trapped in a loop that wraps us back to the beginning of our dread and can easily become a place of stuckness, sadness, paralysis, and a deep feeling of being ill.

Our televisions become our worst enemies, the newspapers our second worst enemies, spinning out and reminding us of our most profound nightmares: Here are a few of those news stories outlining the details of our bad dreams:

1. Trump's first term has been considered one of the most hostile toward LGBTQ (plus) rights in modern history. LGBTQ advocates expect his second term to be worse since he has doubled down on eliminating funding for any transgender-related health care.

2. Some of Trump's most divisive rhetoric during his campaign was toward Latinx people and immigrants, who he blamed as the reason for many of the country's challenges, from safety to job loss to affordable housing. In the final days of his campaign, at a Trump rally in Madison Square Garden, comedian Tony Hinchcliffe called Puerto Rico "a floating island of garbage."

3. During the September presidential debate, Trump indicated that he had “concepts of a plan” for replacing the Affordable Care Act, which protects disabled, chronically ill, and older Americans from being excluded from standard health insurance coverage.

4. In his first term in office, Trump withdrew from the Paris Climate Accords, rolled back over 100 environmental Regulations, deleted climate change references from agency websites and caused an exodus of federal employees from places like the Environmental Protection Agency, which plays an important role in protecting public health, from the industry. A second Trump term will aim to claw back any progress the Biden Administration made in transitioning the country to clean energy and will likely gut the White House’s historic efforts to focus environmental dollars on environmental justice and marginalized communities.

5. Much of Project 2025, authored by the conservative Heritage Foundation, relates to gender, sexuality, and race, offering a variety of ways to cut off abortion access and aiming to end nearly all of the federal government’s efforts to achieve equity, or even collect data that could be used to track outcomes

across the public and private sectors. The blueprint encourages the next presidential administration to disband the Gender Policy Council created by Democratic President Joe Biden and undo all of its work. Heritage suggests eliminating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs across the federal government.

6. Throughout his campaign, Trump has repeatedly taken credit for the fall of *Roe v. Wade*. He appointed three of the Supreme Court justices who helped overturn the decades-old case protecting federal abortion rights.

7. President Donald Trump is doubling down on his promise to carry out the largest mass deportation effort in American history.

I must tell you something that may come as a surprise and seem incomprehensible.

Ten months ago, I felt frightened as I anticipated the election results because I had little doubt that Trump would win. I experienced the thought of this election going the way it did because all hardball and extreme views will inevitably be met with great pushback, and it doesn't take much to tip the

balance, especially when a tipping of the balance is the foundational structure of our entire political system. We confidently produce winners and losers. Politics is not the same as compromise. There is a winner and a loser, period. You are on one side or the other.

Additionally, most people are influenced by fear more than hope. Trump uses fear to influence his fans and his voters, confiding in them, warning them about what will be taken away from them by liberals - their jobs, their homes, their safety, their healthcare, the financial stability of this country, specifically by the overrun of immigrants.

We now have a long road ahead in order to repair what has been broken for a long time.

Silently, I relentlessly questioned why anyone would feel that any benefit they imagine would come out of the winning of this particular president could outweigh the blatant, vocal ugliness, misogyny, racism, wretched superiority, and arrogance that undergirds his contempt for almost anyone.

But before I go on, let me be honest and straightforward: I

have a lot of issues and concerns about the liberal agenda, rationally understanding that no one, no group, no side, is ever entirely right. But hatred, bigotry, intolerance, and dogmatism over people, in general, are none of those concerns I have about liberals.

I found it interesting that I no longer felt frightened within the past few months. Something shifted in me as I contemplated and re-examined who I was, especially as I moved forward with AEER, All Eyes and Ears on Racism.

My motivation to continue the community work I do, my most profound beliefs in the necessity for a deeper commitment to humanity, and a more profound understanding of what love entails and how much we all need to change and help mend and repair one another through building and maintaining sincere, loving, and respectful relationships attached me to a higher purpose. Forming relationships across social barriers becomes the cornerstone of any community.

I became spiritually saturated in the thought that we need to

be shields for one another, however and whenever possible. We need to stand up against all that diminishes us as people, bars us from our dignity, and threatens our rights and freedoms, the very freedom that gives us room to repair ourselves and the world.

I was reminded that our good work, our fervor, and our passion for making the world a better place will never stop. Our perseverance is the tool we need to repair and restore—that is it.

We do not need permission from our elected officials to fight the good fight; we simply need one another.

As I worked to close racial divides by recognizing and standing up against bigotry and racism, it became crystal clear that our battle was not simply political; what makes us whole and fills us with light is our collective love for life, our thirst for peace, our right to pursue happiness and our assurance that those we care about are given the same or equal access to happiness. This truth and the freedom to pursue it against all opposition, is our power, is part of the package of our

freedom - political, spiritual, religious, individual and collective
freedom - and anything that impedes or casts darkness over
the road to our freedoms, must be moved out of the way.

Our freedom is a “calling” about how we treat one another.
Suppose we, as a society, remain polarized and continue to
live in a way wherein we resent those who disagree with us,
cancel them, snub them, speak ill of them, and take exception
with them. In that case, we imprison ourselves into a bad habit
that affects even those fighting for democracy with us as we
nit-pick their methods. This habit will weaken all of us and will
undermine our country. Our division becomes the entry point
for those who want to see us fail.

Together, we can become a force to be reckoned with,
sprawled arm-in-arm against the tides of ill-intentioned others.
And we mustn't think that our power and force only come
through winning elections; those we vote for can lose, we
know. We can become a force through our determination not
to stay down when we have been felled, by our refusal to NOT
go quietly into the night, and by our dedication to all that is
good, all that sustains the well-being of each life.

Understand we are walking into the night right now.

So what will we do?

I was raised to think this way: the moment you see or even sense a problem, focus on the solution.

Any elected official can curtail our rights, chomp away at the bit of our democracy, and put us in states of fear and disrepair, making us forget one of the most profound gifts given to us in this country: the security of our freedom. Not only will we not allow it to be taken away easily, but we will continue to put up a darn good fight to keep it. Freedom is still ours - it is the workbench on which we can repair what is broken. Without it, we have nothing; without it, the expression of rights, whether basic or otherwise, would be meaningless.

Listen to these quotes:

Between stimulus and response, there is a space. In that space, we have the power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom - Viktor Frankl.

Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, but it

must be demanded by the oppressed - Martin Luther King, Junior.

It does not take a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen on setting brushfires in the minds of men - Samuel Adams.

America has promises to keep, and by God, we will continue working to hold them to it. I am beginning to feel like William Wallace in Braveheart.

Robert Reich, an American Professor, author, lawyer, and political commentator, makes this statement:

“NEVER FORGET THIS: THE FORCES RIGGING OUR ECONOMY, UNDERMINING OUR DEMOCRACY, POLLUTING

OUR PLANET, AND STOKING HATRED ARE COUNTING ON US TO GIVE UP. STAY CLEAR-EYED AND READY FOR THE FIGHT AHEAD.”

Our work is not done, and our hope is not lost.

This is not over.