

# Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

The Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost: November 17, 2024

*"I am not Ok, but everything will be alright"*

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to the Twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost. So how are we feeling about today's Gospel? Sounds exactly like it came out of a sound bite from the news station. In fact, one of the most listened-to songs on the charts today by Jelly Roll is entitled, "I am not OK." Interestingly enough, the song ends with "I am not OK, but everything is going to be alright." Hate to say this, but this is exactly what Jesus is telling his disciples.

The Temple will crumble, there will be war with nation against nation, and the kicker here for everyone in California - there will be earthquakes. Oh! and did I mention there will be people who claim their right to power as chosen by God. So maybe Jesus is reporting centuries ago that the world doesn't really change that much. As in our scripture, it sounds just a little like today's news.

But maybe that is the point Jesus is trying to make. The world is constantly changing, and eras come and go. Dictators, leaders, and religious institutions never stay the same. Someone wins, someone loses, but we are called to focus on hope. No matter what the world may bring us, we are called to those first commandments: love God, and neighbor.

Jesus' teachings are not supposed to be political propaganda, and he doesn't care if you feel all comfortable with his message. It is much deeper than most people have the time to ponder. It is Gospel, because it is good news, contained as ever-living Word. And it's a gospel about hope. It's a gospel about opportunities and possibilities. It's a gospel about finding meaning and new life. It's a gospel about your future and my

future. And who among us doesn't sometimes wonder, worry, or even become alarmed about our future and the future of the world?

I've come to realize that when I become alarmed about the future I'm not really focused on the unknown and a time yet to come. I'm really more focused on the known and the present time. I want to know if the temples I've built will withstand the test of time. Will the center hold? Will **my** relationships endure? Will **my** acquisitions and accomplishments continue to give identity, meaning, and security (or at least a numbing illusion of those things)? Will the systems I've created for my life, well-being, and happiness remain intact? Are the foundations of **my** life stable and strong enough to last? Can you see the problem here?

This is also when I realize there are some things I can change, and some I cannot. Yes, there will be famines, and I can help in financial ways, maybe donate time; I am not helpless. I can understand war is never an option, while supporting my country's military and veterans, and acting in ways that promote peace. I am never helpless.

What if, in those times when it feels like our life is shifting and separating and everything is being thrown down, we would trust the Divine Midwife and just push a little? Push with faith, push with hope, push with love, push with anticipation of something new.

Jesus is talking about destruction in one breath and birth in the next. And as any mother will tell you, birthing hurts. Birthing turns your once normal self into an angry animal, it makes you scream, it takes all you've got. And this is where we are today. In the midst of the birthing process - yes, you are not OK, but everything is going to be alright.

Jesus cannot give us a time when the end of the world is near, it happens every day for someone, somewhere. Jesus is never more compassionate than he is during these times when he speaks to his disciples. He speaks with such tenderness and reassurance. "Do not be alarmed." "This must take place." "This is but the beginning of

the birth pangs.” It’s as if he is saying, “Don’t worry. This is normal. You’re going to be OK. I’m the Midwife who will get you through this.”

Marianne Williamson writes, “We are living in two worlds simultaneously: one the fall of Rome and the other a new Renaissance. We need to be both death doulas and birth doulas. Helping to die peacefully the systems that need to die and helping give birth to a wholly different kind of world.

As a hospice chaplain I often greet those who are facing their death or the death of a family member with the question, how is your faith? This is not a critique of what they believe, but an honest question; because when death is among us, this is where faith comes in. That old saying, "this is where the rubber meets the road", can you stay on track? Do you have a faith that contains hope?

Part of the Epistle we left out today is God’s promise:

“This is the covenant that I will make with them  
after those days, says the Lord:  
I will put my laws in their hearts,  
and I will write them on their minds,”

This is a time to remember those laws of love, compassion, respect and dignity for every human being. "For God so loved the world" is inclusive not exclusive, and that love is not lost on us or on this time. I have heard it said, God often puts asunder man’s well laid plans.

You may not be OK, but it’s all going to be alright. Have faith, push forward, hold hope, and keep loving one another. Amen

