

Hate Has No Home Here

It is a privilege and honor to be here tonight and to share a few thoughts with you. I think I was told I had a minute and a half, which is dangerous for preachers, but we're going to do our best.

One of the holiest people that I think all of us have known in our lifetime has been Mother Teresa. And she famously once said that if we have no peace, it's because we've forgotten that we've belonged to each other. We are living in a time where that memory of each other is fading. We're living in a time when many of our leaders think that it's okay or acceptable to say that the needs of others don't matter or are not worthy of being considered.

I'm standing here tonight to talk to you not just as an Episcopalian and not just as a Christian, but as a person, as a leader of faith. And I'm conscious that I'm standing here before you not just as a pastor and a priest, but I am standing in solidarity with rabbis and imams. I'm standing in solidarity with those who lead all the great religions of this world. If you look at each and every one of those religions, you will find one thing is true: none of them tolerate hate. Any religion that gives in to hate does not survive. It corrodes. It destroys the human soul.

And so, the work that we are talking about tonight is work that is essential for our very being. It is essential for our very identity. It is essential for us to be truly human, because speaking out against hate, because making sure that hate has no home here, is literally the work of protecting and saving our very souls.

Now, as a preacher, you would expect that to come from me, but as my introduction said, I also have a background in psychology, and I can tell you the same is true there. The science of psychology teaches us how hate can corrode and destroy the person from within. The minute we give in to our anger and our resentment, the minute we begin to start thinking of somebody as less than and othering them because they are different, no matter what the difference is, is the minute we step back from being human. It's the minute we step back from being what we were created to be.

As Mother Teresa said, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

And so tonight, the work that all of these fabulous people have called you to, the work that has brought us all together, is to recognize that that work is not only needed and essential, but to do less and to ignore our responsibility will cost us our souls.

There's a famous aphorism that all evil needs to do to win is for good people to do nothing.

You know that. To speak out against hate, to make sure that hate has no place in this world, it will take us being willing to be available and to be vulnerable. To be available is to make sure that when we hear something, we say something. When we see something, we do something. To hear one of my brothers and sisters undermined and seen as "other" is to hear it being said about my own self.

To see someone attacked because of their disability, their sexuality, their religion, their country of origin, to see them as less than, as a means of justification for hate, is to see ourselves die, little by little.

We must be willing to be available to one another, to stand together arm in arm, and to stand up against the prevailing attack on the social norms that have made this country the wonderful place that it is.

But that also means that it's going to take a willingness to be vulnerable. That means that sometimes it's going to hurt. That means that sometimes we're going to hear people saying things not just about people that they hate, but then starting to include us in that population of people that they hate.

But that's why hate can't survive, because when you start hating, you add more and more people to hate. And sooner or later, there's more of them than there is of you. And that's why there is power in what we are doing together tonight. That's why, ultimately, hate will not win. That is why we must ensure that hate has no home here.

I shared with you some words from Mother Teresa. I want to add this as well because it is inscribed on the wall of the children's home that she ran in Kolkata:

"Anyway"

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.

[Adapted from a version written by Kent M. Keith in 1968]

My friends, we are fighting for the soul of this nation. I don't say that lightly, and I don't say that as the rhetoric of a preacher. I say that as a father and as a husband. I say that as someone whose family has dedicated itself to public service. Both my parents were elected officials. I say that as someone who has been privileged to be part of this community in Lewes for over 20 years.

We are fighting for the soul of this nation.

We must make ourselves available and vulnerable, standing out and speaking out against hate and embracing even the people who are spewing the hate themselves. Because if we're going to bring healing, then we're going to have to accept a few nails.

If we give in to othering them, if we give in to seeing them as less than human, then we allow them to win because they have made us in their image.

Our work is to make them in the image of love. Our work is to invite them to make a place at the table for others. Our work is to remind them that we will never have peace on this planet until we remember that we belong to each other.

Amen.