

What is going to happen to us (Barry Lopez, "Horizon," p31)?

I mean, worldwide, more than 86 million people have contracted the coronavirus. That's as many as the entire populations of 32 states. 1.8 million have died. That's as many as the entire populations of Wyoming, Vermont and Alaska.

We've had 21 million cases in the US. That's as many as everyone in 16 states. Over 363K have died. That's almost three out of every four people living in the city of Atlanta.

Worldwide, a child dies of hunger every 10 seconds; 3.1 million children annually. This is 45% of all children deaths.

Worldwide there are approximately 74 million people who suffer from food insecurity. Over 90% of those are in this situation due to conflicts amongst people (i.e. war).

Carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is now well over 350 parts per million; a number considered a safe and reducible concentration. Now, we are now over 415 ppm.

US prison population has skyrocketed 650% since 1980 to 1.4 million people. That's equivalent to the entire population of the state of Hawaii being imprisoned.

If you are an African-American male in the United States, you have a 1 and 3 chance of being incarcerated during your lifetime.

And then there are the events of this week....scenes at the U.S. Capitol that we never thought we'd ever see. Several U.S. Senators, Congressmen, Congresswomen opposing election results, defying the will of the people - politicians more than willing to kneel down at the crossroads sell their souls to the devil; all in a self-serving effort to anoint themselves as the next populist "make America great again" messiah.

Again, what is going to happen to us?

In his 2019 book "Horizon" author Barry Lopez writes:

In which national parliaments and legislatures today can we find deliberations characterized by...humility? In which congresses might questions of ethical irresponsibility be successfully raised for discussion? In which Western nations does a determination to address the mental, spiritual and physical health of children override indifference toward their fate? Or are these questions now thought to be anachronistic, questions no longer relevant to our situation?

....Most anyone today can imagine the biblical horsemen of the Apocalypse deployed on the horizon. (Barry Lopez, "Horizon" p 47)

What is it going to take? Rising sea levels that will engulf New York, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles? Incarceration of us all? Deaths of family members in a pandemic? A failed coup?

What is it going to take?

*Read "Kindness" by Naomi Shihab Nye*

What will it take face those self-anointed messiahs, the frightening horsemen of the Apocalypse deployed on the horizon? What will it take?

I must see that it could be me. You must see that it could you. We must see that it could be us.... "an Indian in a white poncho lying dead by the side of the road...journeying through the night with plans...and the simple breath that keeps him alive."

We must see that it could be us; and in an interconnected and interdependent world; we must see that he is us.

Ultimately, I do believe, that's what it will take.

Barry Lopez continues...

....Most anyone today can imagine the biblical horsemen of the Apocalypse deployed on the horizon.... Anyone, too, facing this frightening horizon, might opt to turn away, decide instead to...remain walled off from the world in electronic distraction, or select catatonic isolation within the fortress of the self. But one can choose, as well, to step into the treacherous void between oneself and the confounding world, and there to be staggered by the breadth, the intricacy, the possibilities for that world, accepting its requirement for death but working still to lessen the degree of cruelty and to increase the reach of justice in every quarter.  
(Barry Lopez, "Horizon" p 47)

Yes...despite the statistics, the self-anointed messiahs, what we saw at our nation's capitol this week; despite the frightening horsemen of the Apocalypse deployed on the horizon, I have faith in humanity.

...and this faith is not simply some naïve myth, it's based on science. Yale sociologist and physician Nicholas Christakis, in his book "Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society" believes that in the long moral arc of the universe, we are genetically predisposed to create good societies. It helps insure our survival.

He writes:

My vision of us as human beings...holds that people are, and should be, united by our common humanity. And this commonality originates in our shared evolution. It is written in our genes. Precisely for this reason, I believe we can achieve a mutual understanding among ourselves.... Natural selection has shaped our lives as social animals, guiding the evolution of...a "social suite" of features priming our capacity for love, friendship [and] cooperation.... (Nicholas Christakis, "Blueprint," p xviii, xxi)

Evolutionary psychologist Steven Pinker, in his book "The Better Angels of Our Nature" believes that technological advances, specifically in the realm of publishing has led to increasing literacy around the world and an increasingly educated humanity which, again, over the long moral arc of the universe, has led to a less violent, more peaceful world.

I will be diving deeper into these ideas in an upcoming sermon next month.

A diverse humanity has genetically evolved over the course of history. I see that diversity, as the weaving of the human thread into cloth and fabric. I see that diversity as a necessary ingredient for our future survival as a species. I see that diversity as a necessary ingredient for our future survival as a country. I see that diversity as a necessary ingredient for our future survival as a society. And, I see that diversity as a necessary ingredient for our future survival as a congregation. Why should it be for one yet not the other?

Those who stormed the capitol this week think the opposite. They see diversity as a threat to our species, country, society, congregation. The bottom line is that they fear diversity. They fear being replaced by diversity. They fear being marginalized by what has been marginalized.

They talk of freedom...but little do they know that they can't be free until they free themselves from fear. They will not find the landscape they're yearning for.

How can we heal? I don't think it's through direct dialogue or communication. It's more likely through lovingkindness, compassion, sharing a meal together. I'm not sure, yet it will likely require thinking about the landscape more imaginatively than in simple terms of latitude and longitude. It will require something more expansive than grid, spreadsheet and flowchart thinking. It would require the kind of imaginative thinking that could "turn a boundary into a horizon (Barry Lopez, The Sun, Dec 2019, p16)."

I have faith that we can "...step into the treacherous void between oneself and the confounding world, and there to be staggered by the breadth, the intricacy, the possibilities for that world, accepting its requirement for death but working still to lessen the degree of cruelty and to increase the reach of justice in every quarter."

**Beyond Our Limits**  
**Rev. Dave Dunn**

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**UU Metro Atlanta North**

Yes.... These are the things that people like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King knew all too well. It was the thread, fabric, the cloth of their lives.

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