

Transitions: Our Sons and Daughters Will Prophesy

[John 20:19-31](#)

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

Rev. Heather Leslie Hammer

Lynnewood United Methodist Church

June 4, 2017

The Jewish people were gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. It was a time of harvest, and like for a family reunion, people came home to the Temple to worship and to see one another. By that time, Jews had migrated out from Canaan, the land claimed by the Israelites, into all the lands around the Mediterranean, and they spoke different regional languages. But Jerusalem was the center of their culture and their faith, and so at this holiday time, they came home.

I don't suppose most of these Jews from other places had heard about Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified at Passover time that year. So it was surprising to the crowds to hear people from Galilee speaking, in ways they could understand, about this Jesus, whom God had brought back to life. The people thought the disciples were drunk or crazy!

So Peter stood up. He preached on a passage from the Prophet Joel. The passage told about the future, and that God would pour out God's spirit on all people. Quoting Joel, Peter said, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy" (Acts 2:17).

It was like saying that now there will be new prophets. Yes, Elijah, and Isaiah, and Joel were the ancient prophets, and now our sons and daughters will be our new prophets! It will be a new age! And God's spirit will guide the future!

At our house we have been dealing with change. We had bookshelves installed this week, which meant cleaning out a couple of rooms and getting rid of old desks. Next will come the painters. And when our kids were home last weekend, they convinced us to get rid of our telephone landline. (We've had that phone number for 38 years! I said we'll have to have a retirement party for the phone!) And next to go is the old television set because it is too old to see shows from the internet. And the light fixtures really should have LED lighting...

Our daughter Leslie needs a new car. Could she afford an electric car? And our son is starting a computer software training program. He'll be learning things I can't begin to understand. "The times, they are a changin'."

What does it mean to embrace change? What does it mean to accept the idea that our sons and daughters will prophesy? Here prophesy means to say what *should* happen, not necessarily what *will* happen.

I asked my daughter what she would prophesy for the future of the church. She thought about it and then said, "Well, shouldn't we all try to live like Jesus?" What an idea! Not a

new one, certainly, but what a new age we would see, should we really be able to live like Jesus!

We went for a long walk as a family and talked about the future of our society. Our son, Sepp, had read the commencement address that Mark Zuckerberg just gave at Harvard. We ended up talking about his three main points about how to find purpose in life.

Mark Zuckerberg (the inventor of Facebook) said: "The challenge for our generation is creating a world where everyone has a sense of purpose." He described three ways to go about this: by taking on big meaningful projects together, by redefining equality so everyone has the freedom to pursue purpose, and by building community across the world (<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/05/mark-zuckerbergs-speech-as-written-for-harvards-class-of-2017/>).

So here are 3 hopes for the future—this is what our sons and daughters are prophesying.

First, we need to find meaning in life by working together. When President John F. Kennedy visited the NASA Space Center, he asked a janitor carrying a broom what he was working on. The man answered, "Mr. President, I'm helping put a man on the moon." That's sharing a vision and working together. My children want to pursue their passions. My daughter wants to help people as a clinical social worker. My son wants to sing classical music and find a career that will allow him to do that. Both of their pursuits will involve networking and working together with others of like passion. The Generations X, Y, and Z want relevance. (Generation X came after the Baby Boomers; then Generation Y are the Millennials, and then Generation Z are the 9/11 Generation. These generations are optimistic. They want to make the world a better place for their children—with a clean planet and with healthcare and affordable housing. These efforts will bring purpose to our children.

Second, we need to redefine equality so that everyone can pursue purpose. Let's face it, not everyone has equal access to opportunity. Trying new things means being willing to fail, and then you have to have the resources to get up after falling on your face. How can we help our young adults have access to education and training, so that they can try out their dreams? Our sons and daughters are much better than we are at drawing the circle wide and letting in people who look different and act different. We parents might have trouble with our prejudices, but our children are used to going to school with people of every kind of diversity. They don't understand what the problem is with our denomination that still does not affirm gay and lesbian ordination or marriage. They don't understand what the problem is with communities that want to exclude immigrants and refugees. If we listen to our sons and daughters, we will see ourselves not just as Americans, but as citizens of the world, embracing our differences.

Third, we need to build community across the world that will bring purpose. Community is on the decline. Young families in the Bay Area have to hold two professional jobs to make a house payment. They have long commutes, and on the weekend they have to do everything they don't have time to do during the week—shopping, cleaning, laundry, cooking. They

are exhausted. They don't know their neighbors. They're not sure they have time to have children, and they don't have time for church. Our children have a challenge: to put their cell phones down and to create relationships that matter. Our social challenge will be to use technology to build, not break down, community. Facebook puts us in nearly constant communication with friends, but it also encourages cyber bullying, media addiction, and in some cases a waste of time. How can we channel technology for good? Our sons and daughters will have to figure that out, and they are often lonely. What will help them form community?

These are huge challenges! But I think the Church has something to offer. In all three areas: working together, redefining equality, and building community our church has good things going for us.

We know how to work together in the church to find meaning. Just talk to Cynthia DeLand about going on a Volunteers in Mission trip. Talk to Mary Behrendt or Margene Rivara about refugee resettlement work. Talk to Phil Cooper about Open Heart Kitchen. Talk to Gina Tannahill or Mary Ellen and Doug Huey about Partners for Change. Talk to Donna Kirch about singing in the choir. Working together to find meaning is what we do.

We know how to create equality in the body of Christ. Talk to Wider Welcome about how our church became a Reconciling Congregation open to all LGBTQ people. Talk to Debby Devadason about inviting people of different faiths to our New Year's Blessing. Talk to Marsha Nakamura about the interfaith connections in our Tri-Valley. Talk to Vicki Daughtry about the class on race and white privilege she will lead in June and July. We do not claim to be without prejudice, but we strive consciously to have open hearts, minds, and doors.

We know how to build community. That is what we do every week. We sing together, pray together, break bread together. We dare to question in bible study, and we dare to love and serve so that we strengthen our local communities. We want our church to extend beyond our walls, so we visit the local mosque and give baby clothes to our local hospital. We bring quilts and food to those who have been hospitalized. We serve bagels and brunch to all who gather to worship God in this place.

We are a people with a vision. It's good to be idealistic. But, in society, be prepared to be misunderstood. Anyone working on a big vision will get called crazy, even if you end up right. Anyone working on a complex problem will get blamed for not fully understanding the challenge, even though it's impossible to know everything upfront. Anyone taking initiative will get criticized for moving too fast, because there's always someone who wants to slow you down.

Isn't this what the disciples of Jesus faced? They were a few "crazy" people. They were on fire with a passion for living out Jesus' teachings. Some had moments of doubt, like Thomas (like us), but the relationships Jesus had had with people were so convincing, so full of compassion and love, that soon people stopped doubting. They realized that all they had to

do was turn to God and repent, and then experience forgiveness. It was a green light to go ahead and become part of a movement.

We are part of that movement. Our sons and daughters are taking the lead, and that's a blessing! They will lead us with their visions and the help of the Holy Spirit with us now in this place, and in our places of work and home, empowering us to do God's work. With the Holy Spirit we can work together, bring opportunities to all, and build community. We call it the reign of God. May the Spirit move us!