

What Hope is there for Change _3 - Es Tiempo De Cambiar

In Puerto Rico, they do not vote for the US President, nevertheless the passion for local political leadership is present, perhaps even more so. The months leading up to the election a reoccurring theme emerged both on the radio airwaves and in the political campaigns of the 4 different parties – Red, Green, Orange, Blue party. The song expressed for many Puerto Rican what they may not have been able to put in words – Es Tiempo De Cambiar. Es Tiempo De Cambiar – It is time to Change! To my knowledge the song has no “political preferences”, yet many newly elected leaders in Puerto Rico used this song as their “inaugural anthem” of hope. **Es Tiempo De Cambiar...It's time to change.** I do not know what “theme” song will be played on Tuesday, January 20th 2009 but it could quite easily be “**Es Tiempo De Cambiar**”.

We all aware that a monumental **change** is occurring in our country – an event that merely one generation ago – my lifetime - would have been categorized this event as being laughable at best and perhaps downright dangerous or irresponsible to think about at worst. The event of which I speak is obviously the inauguration of President Elect Barack Obama. Whichever side of the political isle you may find yourself seated this morning – one thing is clear in this country and in our world; Tuesday January 20th 2009 marks a **new season a seasonal shift, a turning point** in essence a **change**. At the risk of overstating, I sense for many of us here, in this country and around the world, this week’s inauguration at our nation’s capital is comparable to only a few events in our modern history – two that came to mind are the elections of John F. Kennedy and Nelson Mandela.

- **John F. Kennedy** was too young and too Catholic by many. One of these “so called deficiencies” would have been a challenged to overcome in 1960 – but both seemed insurmountable at the time. Though it is difficult for many to recall today, there was a

time when being Catholic amongst a majority of Protestants was deemed a threat in this country. Yet, though admittedly narrowly, this young Catholic became President of a people/our nation who self-identified themselves as Protestant in 1960. Historians as well as those of my parents generation many of them tells us that Kennedy's election represented much needed "HOPE" to many a new season a seasonal shift of sorts, a turning point and yes a change to how the world viewed us as well it expanded the definition of who is an American.

- If not Kennedy, perhaps this week's inauguration at our nation's capital for some of you maybe comparable in our modern history with the 1994 elections held in South Africa. Where **Nelson Mandela** was elected at their first democratic elections. As many of you are aware, Nelson Mandela a black South African who fought against Apartheid was arrested and spent the next 27 years in prison until 1990...when Apartheid ended. Only four years later this man is elected President. The significance of Mandela's election was twofold – obviously racially he being a black South African it was only 4 years earlier that Apartheid ended is significant. In essence a prisoner became president. He now assumed the most powerful position in the country of South Africa. But there is more, Mandela ascension into office in 1994, similar to Kennedy's before him in 1960 represented a much needed "HOPE". Once again historians and for myself and others of my generation and older this represented a new season a turning point and yes a change to how people perceived South African externally and even how South Africans both black and white and Indian saw themselves. A hope that things would never be the same.

For many, the election and Tuesday's inauguration of President Elect Barak Obama stands along side or shoulder to shoulder with both Kennedy and Mandela elections – This not because of any accomplishments by Obama, rather for what he represents for so many in this country and around the world - both HOPE and CHANGE. Similar to Kennedy, many viewed him as having noticeable strikes against him – being young and partially African American. Many felt these were two “challenges” to overcome. Similar to Mandela, Obama represents as an African-American and ancestry that encompass second class-citizenship and oppression of a people. Like Mandela who rose from prisoner to president, and provided affirmation of a people and a nation – we stand of the cusp of President Elect Obama – a new season is upon us, a season of hope where people believe that change is possible.

You don't believe me? One of the significant changes I sensed upon my return to the States in December was right here in the city of Philadelphia. It is hope – though such is hard to measure and yes as a region we are often reluctant at times to hope, especially in the midst of our worse financial deficit, potential closing of libraries and pools. Yet surprisingly many Philadelphians remain optimistic. Where does this optimism come from? For some there hope rest on the change within the walls of Whitehouse, but for thousands of others it has to do with the fact that in 2008 – the Phillies and to a lesser extent the Soul – **“reversed the curse”** of our “lingering self-doubt, self-hate as a “second rate” city. Many suggest our inferiority complex comes from that we sit in between New York the largest and DC (who stole our rightful place as the country capital!) the most powerful. But right now we are in the midst of a season of change! In a real sense our “season of change” is right upon us – 3:00 PM Eagles games, like the Phillies before them, the Eagles represents for admirably far too many of us our only legitimate **“hope for change”** – Eagles, Obama, Mandela, Kennedy.

So at this historic moment – both nationally, regionally and congregationally (as we transition into a new space, welcome new people into our community) what is your response to change – change in our nation – change in our region – change in our communities (church, work situation) and the change that enters your life both the expected and the unexpected, both the welcomed and that change we resist even if it is needed. – How will you respond, how will we respond this day as we move forward???

- 1. First, do you believe change is possible – for our nation, for our faith community, for your spiritual walk, for your legacy?**

Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven:

According to our text this morning, our Creator God created a world, a people, where change is part and parcel of all creation. According to our text this morning change is not only possible it is preferred. According to our text this morning change isn't only to be expected it is vital to be aware of the time. Many of us who grew up in the Northeast recognize the seasonal changes without much fanfare – it is no use complaining because winter is upon us! It isn't as if our complaining or praying that change doesn't happen? Believe, the Dow's prayed hard that the tropical weather of Puerto Rico would follow us – nope! Why? Because it is time, it is the season of winter – we have to adjust to the season that God has placed us in or we can lament, which is tempting but doesn't place us in the position of obedience to what and how God is moving in this time, this season, right....Amen. To fully appreciate our text this morning it is important for us to be reminded of the context of these timeless words from Ecclesiastes. King Solomon, who is describe in **1 Kings 3:11-13**

11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, 12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever

be. 13 Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.

King Solomon the writer of the Song of Solomon, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – each of these books individually are studied in and outside religious arena for their literary brilliance.

- Yet the fact remains that for King Solomon and all his Godly wisdom and insight, for all his God-given gift of writing, for all his influence in the world of his day, King Solomon he failed to grasp the value of adapting to various seasons of life that he would face. Brings to mind the words of Jesus.....

Mark 8:36 “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?”

What I am getting at is that King Solomon remained unchanged in his walk with God - spiritually stagnate, spiritually unchanged. I dare not imply for certain that Solomon didn't believe in the change he wrote about in Ecc 3...

- Yet the same King Solomon that completed the Holy Temple that his Father started, was also the King who built his own house, his palace alarmingly much larger than the Temple of God.
- The Solomon whose wisdom and influence expanded the nation of Israel and Judah, was the same Solomon who utilized the sacred act of Marriage as way to seal a deal in expanding his kingdom - 700 wives and 300 concubines.
- The Solomon whom God visited and manifested himself in 2 Chronicles besieged him and the people of Israel to humble themselves, pray and turn from their wicked ways would eventually lead himself, his family, his nation into idols, and away from God.

- **Change however isn't always about "major" life/sin issues. Often is evaluating your life/legacy and discerning am I still moving in the will of God/wind of the Spirit for THIS season. Vs 5 doesn't seem as pertinent as other verses – life and death, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing, but there is also time, a season and purpose for those little things in our life that is hindering us becoming more like Christ – discipline, confession, thankfulness.....Es Tiempo De Cambiar.**

“A time to scatter stones and a time to gather them”

Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven:

2. **Second question that comes to mind upon reading our text is how will you and I prepare for change (optimist or escapist)? Since we know according to scripture, according to creation and the change of our seasons, right before our very eyes we know change is a definite. It begs the question this day to ask “how will you prepare for the change, the season we are in right now? By ourselves, or perhaps amongst other unchanged people/environment? No. Change best happens in community with others.**

I would encourage each of you to value how important and valuable community a faith community is. In **Genesis 41** Joseph recognized for the king that they were entering a season prosperity and store up because he also recognized and prepared accordingly for the coming season of drought. He then shared this message to others (community). Joseph recognized that:

There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven:

- Think about community is in other areas of our lives – Tuesday nationally/globally we celebrate change at the inauguration.
- Just last Sunday we had a wonderful time of baptism – a time for change for Betty and Bethannie it was done as part of our gathering.
- Yesterday, despite the bitter cold hundreds rallied on the corner of gun shop to seek a change and ask for reasonable distribution of hand guns that kill our youth on the streets - baptism, marches in the streets, etc.)

My sense is that this morning here and in congregations in this community is to recognize that our challenge individually and congregationally is real. Therefore as we seek to navigate in this new season we are ushering in – a season of hope. **We must recognize in faith that what is really means to “touch and agree” that the Spirit of God is moving and changing/restoring us.** Where are moving towards? In a season of hope I believe God transforming us from – hate to love, anger to joy, depression to peace, doubt to faith, fear to forgiveness, and stagnation to movement (Solomon). Such a monumental shift in us by our God, such a **Change happens most effectively within community – where we are accountable.** Nelson Mandela at his inauguration said these words to a beaten people, a racially separated country, a country however that was about to experience a change, a season of hope:

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, but that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, handsome, talented and fabulous? Actually who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God within us.

Nelson Mandela, 1994 Inaugural speech

What Mandela, Kennedy, Joseph and I would say President Elect Obama understand, is what King Solomon though wiser than all of them at one point and forgot in his later years and what we as people of faith must never forget – change is possible – there are seasons we must adapt to and as result walk in. Secondly however we are not called to this alone. As I close this message I want to remind you all know without a shadow of a doubt the change in our nation, in the oval office isn't the primary change transpiring in this day and our time. How many here know, that on the beginning of 2009, change is also upon us individually and as a people belonging to God... a God that boldly declares in sending his Son Jesus Christ that the Kingdom of God has come, that the kingdom of God is within you, us and that the Kingdom of God is coming...in other words

. **Es Tiempo De Cambiar...It's time to change.**