

We Need the Prince of Peace, Not Divisive Politics

During the past week people kept asking if I planned to write anything about the Trump impeachment vote, last week's *Christianity Today* article denouncing Trump, or the response to that article from Christian leaders I love and respect.

I honestly didn't want to respond because I'm grieving. I'm already sad because Christmas reminds me of my dad's death two years ago, and the loss of my mother-in-law this year. To make things even sadder, my 91-year-old mother is in a nursing home suffering from dementia. Politics is the last thing I want to talk about. I've already told my family I want a Christmas free of political arguments.

But loss of family members isn't the only thing I'm grieving. I'm also sad that our nation has become so hateful and divided. I remember a time when Christians from various viewpoints could still love one another. Now the intolerant spirit in the world has invaded the church. The Bible says we are one body, but with our cruel words we are hacking that body into bloody pieces. I'm weeping over it, and I believe Jesus is weeping too.

It seems we've all become so opinionated in this era of outrage. We all claim to have the moral high ground, and we are eager to tweet about it. Some Christians view President Trump as the devil incarnate; other evangelical believers see him as a messiah figure. Then there are the believers in the middle, like me, who don't endorse everything Trump does, but, at the same time, don't see many attractive alternatives.

I have friends on all sides of this debate. I know African-American Christians who believe President Trump is a racist; yet I also know conservative black pastors and churchgoers

(including Martin Luther King Jr.'s niece, Alveda King) who support Trump because of his pro-life policies. I know Hispanics who are fearful that Trump will deport them; I also know Hispanic Christians who support Trump because he has courageously defended the nation of Israel from organizations that want to destroy the Jewish state.

I have intellectual friends, some even leaders in academia, who want the president impeached just because he doesn't behave like a tactful statesman or because he questions the science of climate change. I also have blue-collar, working-class friends who wear MAGA hats, drive trucks, own guns and read the Bible daily. Their faith is not any less genuine than those who have theological degrees.

I am grateful for all of my friends. My relationship with them is not based on their political positions. I need their encouragement and prayers when I am going through a hard time, and I know they appreciate my friendship as well. But our relationships are at risk today because the devil is using politics to turn us against each other.

We are a divided church. When writing about the one body of Christ, the apostle Paul wrote: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'" (1 Cor. 12:21)—yet this is exactly what are doing.

In the days leading up to Christmas I listened several times to Casting Crowns' version of the Christmas song "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." That classic hymn was written by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow during the Civil War, when our nation was consumed with hatred. It was later put to music, and became hugely popular after Bing Crosby recorded his version in 1956.

Part of the song says:

And in despair I bowed my head/

*There is no peace on earth I said/
For hate is strong and mocks the song/
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep/
"God is not dead; nor does he sleep!
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail/
with peace on earth, goodwill to men!"*

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a host of angels appeared to the shepherds and said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). The peace that Christ brought will endure forever. Jesus was not elected, and He cannot be impeached. His peace will be tested until His return, but in the end we know who wins the final war.

This Christmas my focus is on the Prince of Peace. He is our only hope in this season of angry dissension. May the bells of Christmas be heard above the constant bickering. May the bells of Christmas drown out our self-righteous media. May the bells of Christmas override my own offense at those who don't agree with me.

I pray Jesus will tenderize our hearts and remove the deceitful root of bitterness that makes us think we have a right to hate our brothers and sisters. And I pray that Christians will work to unite the church rather than throw gasoline on the raging fires of discord. {eoa}