

**No Longer Invisible, No Longer Silent
Life in a Post Kavanaugh America
Rev. Wendy Jones
Preached Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Grand Valley
September 30, 2018**

Centering Words - - Rev. Gretchen Haley

We believe you.
Your stories
held too long in secret and shame
are safe here.

You are safe here
to grieve and rage
and reckon and reconcile
return and restore

There is a place here for
every piece of yourself
Bodies, and spirits
Voices and breath
Broken and beautiful
Bitter and still refusing
To give up hope

In this autumn light
There remains a path for beginning again

Do not hold back your heart break
Or your joy,
your vision for the world that is already and also
not yet

Let every tender longing of your heart
Be an offering for this time
And for this community
As we are building here
Already a new way:
The will, the courage, the faith
To be the leaders, the people,
the parents, the friends, the citizens
Our world, and we
Need now

The change begins
now.

Come let us worship together

Meditation: A Cup of Tea

<https://theteacupoflife.com/2015/06/the-tale-of-overflowing-teacup.html>

“Once, a long time ago, there was a wise Zen master. People from far and near would seek his counsel and ask for his wisdom. Many would come and ask him to teach them, enlighten them in the way of Zen. He seldom turned anyone away.

One day an important man, a man used to commanding obedience came to visit the master. “I have come today to ask you to teach me about Zen. Open my mind to enlightenment.” The man then proceeded to continue talking telling the Zen master everything he knew about the world, and Buddhism and truth. After a few minutes the Zen master asked if the man would like some tea. The man nodded yes and continued talking.

When the tea was served the master poured his visitor a cup. He poured and he poured and the tea rose to the rim and began to spill over the table and finally onto the robes of the wealthy man. Finally, the man exclaimed, “Enough. You are spilling the tea all over. Can’t you see the cup is full?”

The master stopped pouring and smiled at his guest. “You are like this tea cup, so full that nothing more can be added. Come back to me when the cup is empty. Come back to me with an empty mind.”

Sermon:

So, I literally did nothing on Thursday and Friday. I sat, and I watched the entire testimony of both Dr. Ford and Bret Kavanaugh. I couldn’t seem to do anything but watch.

And take it all in.

I took it in. And I listened. And I watched.

I listened to Dr. Ford and the pain in her voice, the fear. I cried as she talked about the laughter she couldn’t get out of her head.

And then a few hours later, I listened, and I watched.

The nominee for The United States Supreme court justice, Bret Kavanaugh testify. And, I took it all in.

The anger and the rage. And the screaming of Lindsey Graham, and the rude interruptions of Charles Grassley.

And then, I spent the rest of the evening checking in on people in my life who texted me saying “I am a mess.”

Three texts from three different women from three different phases of my life. “I am a mess.” The same exact words.

And then on Friday I didn’t get dressed. Because I was witnessing history in the making at a critical point in time for our country.

And I watched one man flinch in the elevator as a young woman yelled, “look at me when I’m talking to you. Are you saying I don’t matter? You are saying what happened to me doesn’t matter!”

And I watched him flinch. Because she got through. Somehow, she got through to him.

And a few hours later, he came out and changed his yes vote to a conditional “maybe” only after a larger investigation.

And so, we get a week reprieve. To take more time. To catch our breath. To gather more information and facts. That is all so many people wanted.

But in the mean- time, real damage has been done.

Women throughout the country are trying to catch their breath. What we saw and the behavior of our elected officials this week was stunning.

I was talking to a person just yesterday and she said she was literally blown backwards feeling the angry energy coming out of the TV.

I am grieving, because I fear that I witnessed a twenty -year friendship between two friends disintegrate over the course of this week.

I watched in horror and sadness as I observed my male friend this week who simply couldn’t get out of his principled intellect about the importance of “due process.” Post after post about how unfair the process has been.

Even when a mutual friend posted saying “please stop. You are doing harm.” Because she was having a visceral emotional reaction to his posts. He didn’t “get it.” And he didn’t stop.

He was responding with an intellectual reaction, and what he didn't understand and by the number of his posts, still doesn't understand is that he has missed something very big this week.

And he has no concept of the harm his intellectual exercise is doing to the women around him. For him it is an argument to win.

For them they are just wanting to be heard and feel safe.

I felt like there were so many women asking to be heard, and there were so many men wanting to prove that they were right.

It was a total disconnect.

I understand my friend's intellectual rationalization about due process. I have people in my life who have been deeply wounded by false allegations. False allegations are devastating and must be taken seriously.

But what my friend didn't understand this week was the triggering happening on an emotional level, happening to so many thousands of women across this country. He can't seem to see how his intellectualizing this process is impacting one of his best friends.

And I am heartsick to watch this rift. One that I don't know if it can ever be repaired between these two people.

And I obviously am not the only person witnessing this, because my wise women clergy colleagues have been doing their best to modify the damage. I started just posting this message from Rev. Peggy Clark over and over again in different conversation threads.

To the hundreds of men on my friends list: Be gentle with the women in your lives. You are likely not to understand how traumatizing this last week has been. Women are suffering a lot these days as they are reliving all the stories they never told. You may not understand why the women you love are on edge, so I'm telling you. Those of us who are in women-only spaces or in professions that put us in proximity to other people's pain can attest to the intensity of this week. Please be gentle with the women you love.

Rev. Peggy Clark

And for those who are able to listen, women are sharing their truth with you. Sometime more starkly than they are used to, and probably more bluntly than many of you are used to hearing.:

From the article: **“You Could Say We are Pissed.”**

“Some of us have stomach cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting.

Some of us have migraine headaches, light sensitivity.

Some of us ache in our bones and muscles.

Some of us feel shooting pain in our limbs. Some of us have chills.

Some of us are on the ground with back spasms.

We are pissed and we are afraid. The spectacle of anger we saw in Brett Kavanaugh scares us on an animal level.

Most of us have spent our lives monitoring our faces, softening our voices, and contorting ourselves into pleasing shapes in order to avoid ever being in a room with that man, yelling from his red, twisted face.

I wanted to run from him and hide. I wanted to run to him and soothe him.

Some of us are eating soup for dinner because our jaws ache from clenching and grinding.” <https://www.katykatikate.com/the-blog/2018/9/28/you-could-say-were-pissed>

As you can see.

None of this is black and white.

It is messy.

Do you imagine that the women who are speaking out don’t have empathy for the men in their lives? We are wives and mothers and sisters and daughters. We love the men in our lives very much.

And we are also trying gently and loudly, and now angrily to get these same men that we love to hear us. Because for so long our stories and life experiences have been ignored, brushed off and made invisible.

Another woman colleague, Rev.Bridget Laflin, posted this to her Facebook page. In a conversation with a man she didn’t know but just felt exasperated with this week.

She wrote:

"You want to see change happen? How about you truly support a woman or person of color running for office? I'm not talking about just giving money or phone banking or door knocking (although you should do that too.)

I'm talking about taking care of her kids or cooking her meals or cleaning her house. Try taking on all of those jobs that women and people of color have been doing to support white men for centuries. Squash all of your own ideas and make yourself a mouthpiece for the person you support.

Step out of the spotlight. Take yourself out of the running for that elected position or that promotion. Give up your place at the head of the line and put all of your energy into supporting the success and power of women or people of color or other oppressed people. We have been doing it for people like you since the beginning of time.

When you're ready to do that; when you are ready to sacrifice your ego, your position in society, your confidence, your body; when you show you are willing to support us the way we have supported you for centuries, then maybe we will begin to have enough common ground to feel that your input on how to better our lives is appropriate.

Until then, even if you are not ready to truly support us, please at least be quiet and let us speak."
(Rev. Bridget Laflin)

I know those are harsh words.

But, we are in a pivotal point in history, and women are no longer willing to simply be quiet and let the status quo move forward.

The quiet status quo has brought us to this point in history, and many people are saying "no more."

If you're thinking, "yeah, but it's not me."

Maybe it **is** you.

Maybe ask a woman in your life if there have ever been things she doesn't talk to you about because she didn't feel safe.

And for those of us white women in the room, maybe it's **us** too!

Just as women of color occasionally have to look at the white women in their lives and say the same thing. "We love you, but you just don't get it."

And then we as white women need to take a deep breath and say, "I don't get it. I don't even get what I don't get it. But I get that I don't get it because they're telling me I don't get it and I **trust** them and **respect their experience** and my tea cup is empty enough continue to learn."

Some of my friends this week literally can't breathe.

So, yes, men.

Be kind and gentle with the women in your lives. And when they are telling you a story that comes from deep within, please do not relegate it to your intellect.

It's okay if you don't get it. We don't need you to "get it."

What we need is for you to "get" that you don't "get it." That's all. In fact, our standards are pretty low. Most women don't want you to totally "get it."

Because it's a horrible feeling that we don't wish on anybody else. But, please just acknowledge our pain.

The next few weeks are going to be tough on a lot of people. So, I just invite us to once again, think about a few things.

Take a deep breath and create some space to make sure you are **responding** instead of **reacting**.

When in doubt, error on the side of being kind.

And, occasionally ask yourself "am I needing to be right, or am I just needing to be heard?"

Those are two very different things. If you think you just need to be right, perhaps think about taking a deep breath and intentionally listen instead. You might be surprised what you hear.

Benediction: "Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world at once, but stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach." Clarissa Pinkola Estes.