

I have a job to do

By [Evan D. Garner](#)

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Eight years ago, I woke up early on a Wednesday morning to the news that America had elected Barack Obama as its next president, and I shed some silent tears of joy. I was not particularly enthused that a Democrat had been elected. Although I had voted for Obama, I had always considered myself a Republican, but the 2008 election felt as if it were about more than political party. As the parent of a one-year-old daughter who lay asleep in the next room, I cried because I knew that my child would never know a country in which a black president was inconceivable. Only a decade or so earlier, that idea was beyond my comprehension. Even on that morning, with the headlines securely printed, it felt surreal. When she woke up, I held her in my arms and cried again. Something was different. Something was new.

Today, when I woke up, I was surprised to find that my daughter was already awake. The sun was not up yet, but she had gotten out of bed to use the bathroom. I whispered good morning to her and encouraged her to go back to bed, but I slipped away as quickly as I could. I did not want her to ask me the question that I knew she would ask. I did not want to have to tell her that Donald Trump had defeated Hillary Clinton. I had not yet had a chance to think of what I would say to her. Like most of America, I was still stunned at the result. I had anticipated Hillary's victory as another opportunity to hold both my now nine-year-old daughter and her 16-month-old sister in my lap and tell them that there is no reason for them to think that a woman could not be president of this great nation. But I couldn't say that—at least not at first.

I don't know what your reaction to this election result has been. I spent a good bit of this morning in quiet prayer, sorting through my own reactions. I have seen your posts on Facebook—some championing this unexpected victory and others confessing profound defeat. I have read articles that try to explain how this happened and some that predict what the next four years will be like. I have listened to some of Donald Trump's victory speech, and I have heard part of Hillary Clinton's concession address. I have spoken or texted with my wife, some colleagues, and a

few friends. And, through it all, the best that I can tell is that I have a job to do.

I have a responsibility to my daughters to remind them that there is still no reason to believe that a woman could not become our president. This is not the first time that a woman has faced a profound setback, and it will not be the last. There may have been some misogyny behind this particular result, but this is in no way a victory for sexism. Although I must admit that, as a white male, my privilege makes it easy for me to disregard the nature of this particular defeat, I also choose to believe that anything is possible. Irrational and privileged though it may be, I need that hope. As a father of two daughters, I must look beyond today and hold on to hope for tomorrow.

It is my job as a parent to tell my children that this is still a great nation and that our democratic process is a wonderful privilege and blessing. It is my job to model that belief to them by giving President-elect Trump my respect and, as Hillary Clinton said today, my open mind. I cannot let disappointment become despair. I cannot let despair become rejection. I must show my children how to participate in a civil society that is more than triumphant winners and dejected losers. Despite my own feelings, I must embrace that which unites us and insist on maintaining hope for the future.

I also have a job to do as a clergyman. I have a calling—a holy vocation—to preach the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ is a message of hope that transcends every possible moment of despair. Even when it feels like the candidate who was elected is unlikely to strive for a world that looks ever more like God's kingdom, the gospel of hope is still operative in the world. It is freedom for the oppressed. It is riches for the poor. It is food for the hungry. It is life for those who dwell in the shadow of death. This Sunday, in [Luke 21](#), we will hear Jesus warn his followers about wars and insurrections and famines and plagues and persecution, and we will also hear him tell them not to lose hope. Their hope is our hope. We believe that God is at work in the world around us and among us and through us. We may not know how that will work out—notice what Jesus says about preparing your own defense for the moment of trial—but we trust and believe and hope and expect that it will.

Now more than ever, our nation needs the gospel of hope. We need to remember that there is more at stake than an election. We need to know that there is a hope greater than any political party. Our ultimate confidence cannot be in a presidential

candidate, nor can any candidate lead us to true despair. As followers of Jesus, we must have hope. It is a necessary product of faith. Yes, that faith will be tested. Yes, our ability to rely on hope will be difficult. But hope is what the God-man gives us. Hope is what the resurrection secures for us. Hope is what we have. Hope is who we are.

*Originally posted at [A Long Way from Home](#)*