

So when I graduated from high school, there was what you might call a fear amongst many of my classmates about who you would get assigned as your roommate when you got to college. You know, like you'd move into your dorm only to discover that your roommate was, I don't know, some punk rock kid with pink hair. The fear being that you would end up being roomed with someone who was totally opposite of you. Truth be told I wasn't too worried about that because I was going to a fairly conservative private college where you'd be hard pressed to imagine someone like that attending. You see where this is going right? Freshman year at this small conservative private college, my roommate a punk rock kid with pink hair.

But before you rush too quickly to judgment, as I assuredly did when first meeting him, it actually ended up being a really great year. We actually formed a great friendship and found that we had a lot in common. We ended up bonding over a shared love for music. I had a love of all things classic rock and he of course loved punk rock and together our musical interests began to influence each other's unique musical tastes. In other words, I entered my punk rock era.

The thing I loved (and still do love) about punk rock music is that I have found it often to be a temperature gauge of sorts for the things happening in the world. By its nature, punk rock is a message to the greater society it finds itself in. Some call it rebellious, crude, and confrontational, others call it authentic, honest, and counter-cultural. But six to one, half dozen to another, whether you feel punk rock reflects societies problems or calls attention to them, the thing that drew me to it as a young college person was the increasing awareness that all is not right. The world as it is, is not how it could be or should be.

But the problem with punk rock is that it often ends there. There's not a lot of hope to be found in punk rock. It really only addresses half the equation – that there's something wrong. And if we're not careful, if we hear Jesus words through that kind of lens, then we risk severely missing out on the good news in this passage. We'll only hear condemnation, we'll only hear the parts about destruction and division, we'll only hear that there's a problem. And what's more, it's a problem that we created and it's a problem that we alone need to figure out. And in truth, some do understand Jesus' words in that way. So they make it their mission in this world to seek division; they make it their purpose to be confrontational, casting judgment down upon anyone who doesn't adhere to their worldview and understanding of Christian faith. Because it really does seem like it's up to us to make this world into the Kingdom of God.

But here's the thing: Jesus wasn't a punk rock star. And we aren't called to be punk rock stars either. For we do not live as those who have no hope. To live with hope is to recognize that all is not right, all is not as it could be or should be; but it is also to believe against all perceptions that it will not remain this way forever. To be people of hope is to know that change will happen – it always does, but that when God gets ahold of change, it becomes transformation. And God has not and will not stop transforming this broken world until it is whole again. Until all things are made new.

So we shouldn't be shocked at Jesus' words. They shouldn't surprise us or offend us or leave us in a state of seeking out confrontation and division, as though that's what he's calling us to do here. He's simply stating what we know to be true: there is brokenness, there is change, and no amount of change that we come up with seems to heal what is broken. So we hope. We hope in the one who does what we ourselves cannot do. We hope in the one who transforms what is broken, as a fire refines and purifies, not so that we are destroyed, but that we may be strengthened, built up, and wrapped in holiness and righteousness. We hope in the one who is baptized into death so that even death can be transformed by the power of his love and mercy.

What I'm saying my friends, is that we need not fear or get anxious about Jesus' words here. This is still the good news we've come to know and hold firmly in our hearts through faith. And so we need not fear or dread the divisions that exist in our lives in the world around us. Because all is not right. But it's not the end either. The Kingdom of God is not something we bring about ourselves. Its fullness does not exist only in a previous time as though it were something we once had but have since lost. Its greatness is not back there, I promise you.

The Kingdom is here right now and its fullest expression of hope and joy and love and peace beyond all human understanding is where we are all being led. For God continues to make all things new through Christ – including me and you. God continues to take this ever-changing world and transform it into something good and right and holy, until all that is broken can be made whole in Christ. And so we keep going, not with complacency or a confrontational spirit, but with a spirit of hopefulness and assurance. Hold fast to the hope we have in our hearts through faith. For we aren't called to be punk rock stars, criticizing and condemning every broken thing. We're called to be disciples of the living God who makes all things new. We're called to bear witness to the transformation of brokenness around us. We're called to be voices of hope in the world. Just like Christ is for us. Amen.