So. Big week this week. Big week. Big week. One of the most important midterm elections in the history of our country. It is our first real chance to try and save democracy since Trump was elected for the second time.

Of course, it's not just Trump we're up against; it's an entire oligarchic class system that has been coalescing on the coattails of an economic inequality that has been expanding since the 1980's. That inequality is, I hope, nearing its zenith. For if it continues, the future will be very painful.

But macho man fascism and wealth concentration are simply two paths to the same place. They are partners on the march to an authoritarian world where freedom is only for the rich and powerful. Is that the world you want? That's not the world I want. And, you know what? Despite its many and egregious missteps on the way, it's not the dream to which this country has ever been oriented.

This is our chance to course correct. And course correct we must.

Since his second term began, Trump has terrorized marginalized communities, from immigrants to the LGBTQ+ community. He sanctioned and encouraged the unlawful, abusive, and straight up murderous use of force against U.S. residents regardless of citizenship status. He has occupied U.S. cities with federal troops, lackeys, and goons. He has weaponized the executive branch against political rivals. He has quashed free speech and punished critics. He has gutted key administrative infrastructure and our military leadership, wasting its resources on idiotic and criminal endeavors, for idiotic and unethical reasons.

He has withheld federal funds from states he views as hostile to him. He has weakened international institutions and destroyed long lasting alliances that kept the peace. He has whored our country out to Russia. He has ignored the constitutional structure of checks and balances. He has promoted wild disinformation. His economic policies are sophomoric. And he has undermined and attacked our system of voting, which is an attack on the very foundation of democracy. He is a narcissist, a sexual predator, and a tyrant. Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?

Of course you know all that. But here is something we likely need to consider: Trump is a mirror. He is a mirror of our culture. A mirror of a society gorged on greed and fear. A mirror of a culture that has lost its grounding and no longer knows how to discern the truth. A mirror of a society that, in the name of convenience, bargained away its empathy and found itself confusing freedom with domination. All of which was a fantastic deal for the economic elite who simply kept betting on themselves while further rigging the game with each new gain.

So when we win - and we will win; either now or in 28 by voting, or after that by other means… when we win, we must understand that political victory is only the beginning. It will then become incumbent on us to reconfigure our society. For the oligarchs that have lined up behind Trump's vision of greed is good will still be there. The share of wealth in the Epstein class has soared to feudal levels.

Since 1980, the top 1% of earners saw their income share grow from 10.5% to 19%, while the bottom 50% saw their share fall from 21% to 14%. Between 1980 and 2022, the bottom 90% of earners saw wage growth of only 36%, compared to 162% for the top 1% and 301% for the top 0.1%. The dreams deferred by the wealth gap create the conditions in which racism, misogyny, abuse, crime, and facism thrive.

Perhaps the most robust pushback is occurring in California where Prop 40 seeks a one time 5% tax on California's 250 or so billionaires. It probably won't pass though. Why? Well, a record $612 million from more than 70 current and former California billionaires has flooded this year's state elections, nearly half of it for groups working to defeat Proposition 40.

The Epstein class won't go down without a fight it seems. So be it. Trump is a mirror. But I say, in case of emergency, break glass.

Vote. Though most of you already have by now. And then what? I don't know that any of us in this room are algorithm wizards or think tank trend setters or have our hands on the levers of power. But that doesn't mean we are without recourse. I think our role is one of early adopters of proposed possibilities, proselytizers and exemplars of the beloved community, truth tellers, and local organizers. Also, and crucially, we spiritual pioneers.

For here we find that Gill Scott-Heron was correct. The revolution will not be televised. Because spiritual engagement makes for bad t.v. But that's okay, we've tried a reality tv show celebrity as President and it didn't go so well. No, the real revolution will not be televised because the real revolution is finally spiritual. It is a revolution of the way we see the world and see ourselves, and see ourselves in the world. And that is an enterprise of the soul.

First we've got to stop the bleeding, stabilize the patient. That means get the fascists out of power. Then we rehab. And come back stronger than before. Ready to workshop our entire sense of the civic self.

A spiritual revolution won't happen overnight. It will likely unfold over many, many years and stories. We would be fools to measure ourselves daily against a desired outcome that will take time. Many of us may never see the final outcome for which we strive. So our striving must be to do the best we can in this moment given our capacity and the options available to us. We must

always be excellent in doing what we can with what we have. And then one day, when I say that we are kin with the trees and bees, it will not be a fantasy but a felt experience.

It's a long walk. It is underway. This coming Tuesday is but one step. But one way or another, I believe that this week will be a turning point. I believe it will be a turning point regardless of the results. Change is coming. Much better if it is by the vote. But as I see it, our country is ready to turn a corner.

We are tired of the lampoonish culture wars waged by the right AND the do-nothing corporate democrats on the less right. We want our people to be secure and our systems to not be insatiably destructive. We already have all the tools and systems and technology required to revolutionize our country and world. All we've ever needed is two things; the political will and the sense of what's possible that will empower it.

Our political will has been galvanized by the looming spectre of American facism and corporatocracy. Our will has been activated. On the other hand, our sense that a better world is possible still needs a little proof of concept, a little taste to really launch. And we need to know that a better world is possible. A world we can touch and strive for.

For as much as I loathe the world that MAGA trumpets, I have absolutely no desire to return to the status quo that existed before Trump. After all, that status quo got us Trump. And more; it produced oligarchy and a collapsing planetary system. We can't go back.

We not only need a return to honesty, decency, accountability, the rule of law, and to just justice, we need to reincentivize our entire society. We need to find creative solutions to the conditions the old system saddled us with, solutions that are more evolved than the carrot and stick of capitalism and incarceration. We need solutions that promote safety, comfort, and health for everyone.

And those solutions already exist! It's just that they don't tend to result in the concentration of wealth and power. So those people and systems incentivized, interested in, and possessing wealth and power are arrayed against our new world. But make no mistake, the world we want is more than possible.

The world I want is… well… it's kind of like church. This place runs on love. This place runs because you love it and love each other and love what we do together. And so you tend the flowers and maintain the building. You volunteer to teach and learn. You give money because you know that's what it takes to keep the lights on and pay for trusted, accountable expertise in music, ministry, administration, teaching, and tech. Of course there are sometimes mistakes, fractures, or bad behavior. We're not perfect. But we have mechanisms designed to repair.

It doesn't have to be perfect. We sing together, pray together, and take care of one another. What a world!

Can you imagine a country like that? A country we all loved so much that we worked to maintain it because we knew it was doing good for others as well as ourselves… and because it was a beautiful offering to life? That is possible.

The other day I was driving by a park. It was a beautiful fall day and I imagined myself sitting in the grass and running my fingers through its green and enjoying the blue sky sunshine and occasional cloud. But I was also aware that no matter how copacetic that scene, there would be a looming shadow of dread for the state of my country. I take that shadow with me everywhere.

At present, there is never a moment that I am not both afraid for myself and others and also just heartbroken and furious. That fear and heartbreak disrupt my ability to feel love when love is pushing up through the soil and shining down through the atmosphere. That fear and heartbreak disrupt my ability to revel in the simple splendor of being alive which is the birthright of all beings.

And so that is our task; to restore this birthright, to craft a culture where we all might revel in simple beauty and see it clearly freed of terror and dread. That effort is underway, has been underway. This week is significant. It's what, in fiction writing, is referred to as a pinch point. But whatever the results, the work is only beginning.

When I am at last able to once again sit in the grass knowing that everyone is reasonably safe from external forces, then my very breath will be ecstatic. And I will breathe in deep. And then get back to bringing about a better world, a world that knows this truth: when love, not power, guides us, life can be joyful.