

Isaiah 58: 6 – 12

⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;

your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

¹² Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

My friends, we have come to the end of a long journey.

The American people have spoken, and they have spoken clearly. A little while ago, I had the honor of calling Senator Barack Obama — to congratulate him on being elected the next president of the country that we both love.

In a contest as this, his success alone commands my respect for his ability and perseverance. But that he managed to do so by inspiring the hopes of so many millions of Americans, who had once wrongly believed that they had little at stake or little influence in the election of an American president, is something I deeply admire and commend him for achieving.

This is an historic election, and I recognize the special significance it has for African Americans and for the special pride that must be theirs tonight.

I've always believed that America offers opportunities to all.

Senator Obama believes that, too. But we both recognize that though we have come a long way from the old injustices that once stained our nation's reputation and denied some Americans the full blessings of American citizenship, the memory of them still had the power to wound.

A century ago, President Theodore Roosevelt's invitation of Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House was taken as an outrage in many quarters.

America today is a world away from the cruel and prideful bigotry of that time. There is no better evidence of this than the election of an African American to the presidency of the United States.

Senator Obama has achieved a great thing for himself and for his country.

I applaud him for it, and offer my sincere sympathy that his beloved grandmother did not live to see this day — though our faith assures us she is at rest in the presence of her Creator and so very proud of the good man she helped raise.

Senator Obama and I have had and argued our differences, and he has prevailed. No doubt many of those differences remain.

I pledge to him tonight to do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges we face.

I urge all Americans who supported me to join me in not just congratulating him but offering our next president our goodwill and earnest effort to find ways to leave our children and grandchildren a stronger, better country than we inherited.

Whatever our differences, we are fellow Americans.

And please believe me when I say no association has ever meant more to me than that.

It is natural tonight to feel some disappointment, but tomorrow we must move beyond it and work together to get our country moving again.

I am so deeply grateful to all of you for the great honor of your support. The road was a difficult one. But your support and friendship never wavered. I cannot adequately express how deeply indebted I am to you.

You know, campaigns are often harder on a candidate's family than on the candidate, and that's been true in this campaign. All I can offer in compensation is my love and gratitude, and the promise of more peaceful years ahead.

Every candidate makes mistakes, and I'm sure I made my share of them. But I won't spend a moment of the future regretting what might have been.

This campaign was and will remain the great honor of my life. And my heart is filled with nothing but gratitude for the experience, and to the American people for giving me a fair hearing before deciding that Senator Obama and my old friend, Senator Joe Biden, should have the honor of leading us for the next four years.

I will never regret a fate that has allowed me the extraordinary privilege of serving this country for half a century. Today, I was a candidate for the highest office in the country I love so much. And tonight, I remain her servant.

Tonight, more than any night, I hold in my heart nothing but love for this country and for all its citizens, **I wish Godspeed to the man who was my former opponent and will be my president.**

Thank you, and God bless you.

What you just heard was an abridged version of late Sen. John McCain's concession from 2008. I came across this speech due to the events of last weekend and the week before, which resulted in Joe Biden being elected as the next president of the United States of America, winning against and replacing his opponent Donald Trump. Twelve years ago, McCain had been running for president against Barack Obama and, as you probably all know, lost, making his opponent the first African American president of the United States. A historic election, as he called it.

I had completely forgotten about this speech until I heard it again last weekend. I do however remember having heard it when I was fifteen years old. A German news channel broadcasted it just a few hours after it had actually taken place. I was too young to understand how great a speech that was back then, but I remember how impressed I was by the sportsmanship he showed on that day, admitting defeat to a competent opponent and offering his support as a fellow politician and American citizen.

Now, twelve years later, and me being twelve years older, it impresses me even more. 'This is how things should be', I thought. Hearing him speak, there was no negativity in his voice. No hatred, no anger, no pity or revenge. Not even disappointment, even though he admitted that in his speech. Just honest and genuine respect for his colleague and soon to be president and pride for having had the honour to compete against a man like him.

Over the last four years, the US had had a president, that made me forget a little, that this kind of behaviour is possible in politics.

When McCain's audience realized that he was about to congratulate his opponent, some of them started booing.

They wanted him to be president and not Obama. McCain, however, patiently kept talking, kept expressing his respect and understanding of how important and symbolic the presidency of his colleague was and would be.

As he kept talking, Boos turned into the sound of clapping hands and in the end, cheering and applause.

Simply by staying calm and showing dignity and humility, he turned the crowd around. For McCain, the presidency was never about him. It was about what it means to be president, leading a country and taking care of its people. Knowing that task in good hands, there was no reason to be upset and or attack his opponent.

While I was writing this, something came to my mind, which Jonas had said to me last Sunday, talking about Biden becoming the next president and all the tasks that were waiting for him. 'The most important competence of a world leader is probably not how much he knows or can do, but what mood he sets for his country.'

Wise words!

Donald Trump had set a mood of aggression and disrespect, and slowly but surely shaped the political and social discussion that way. He encouraged people to be aggressive and hateful, by being like that himself, implying that this is how it's done. McCain did the exact opposite. By showing dignity, strength and confidence he turned Boos into applause.

This is how you lead by example!

And not only in politics, but in every situation in life. If a toddler falls and hits his knee, he looks at his parents. If the parents show shock, he starts crying, if they tell him that it's okay, and to try again, he gets up and tries again.

We set the mood, no matter when, no matter where!

We are the ones who decide whether we want to live in a world shaped by hate and jealousy or by love and mutual respect.

McCain said it and I can only agree: There will be differences. There will be topics on which some of us will never agree. We will argue, discuss, fight over it. We will get angry and frustrated. And I think that is okay. We don't have to like everyone and everything around us. But a perfect world is not one in which there are no disagreements, but one in which we accept, respect and listen to each other's opinions. And even then, it is possible to get along and be friends.

My best friend and I have such a history of constant disagreement and fighting, that for a while some people didn't even realize that we were actually friends. And still, he is the person I trust most in this world, because I know that, even though I might do things differently, he will always do what he genuinely thinks is best, and that is what counts to me!

I will end here by giving you this on your way:

Let us not be consumed and influenced by our own hatred and anger.

Let us remind ourselves to be patient, respectful and humble.

Let us accept that it won't always work as well as it did then. But let us try to follow the example of people like John McCain and many others. And let us lead others the same way.

Let us be the ones who turn Boos into applause.

Amen.