



# HOPE

WHY? HOW? WHEN?

Sundays, 11:30am – 1:00pm in January 2021  
Services on Zoom & Facebook @NCDorchester

## Hope for Leadership

### Part 2 in the Series *Hope: Why? How? When?*

1 Samuel 15:10 – 23; Philippians 2:6 – 11

Mako A. Nagasawa

Neighborhood Church of Dorchester, January 10, 2021

### Introduction: The Insurrection of January 6, 2021

What happened this week makes us look at our hopes for leadership. Wednesday, January 6, 2021 will go down in American history as a day of infamy. What we saw this week at the Capitol Building in Washington DC was an attempt at armed rebellion, that is, a violent insurrection, to overthrow American democracy and our legitimate government. They were armed. They had bombs. They carried Confederate flags into the U.S. Capitol Building, a symbol that had previously been carried only as far north as Fort Sumter during the Civil War. And with no sense of irony, they took down the American flag and replaced it with a Trump flag. They interrupted the official counting of the Electoral College of the 2020 Presidential Election. They forced our elected leaders, their staff, and custodians to run to bunkers while they violently forced their way onto the Senate floor and offices. They made it clear what they wanted. They shouted, “Trump won the election.” A man wearing face paint and horns and touting QAnon conspiracy theories declared that Trump should be president for another term, which has an eerie resemblance to the biblical story of the setting up of the golden calf.

What’s more, investigations have started into many questions. What happened to the Capitol Building police? Video footage shows many Capitol police officers courageously doing their job. One Capitol police officer, Brian Sicknick, a 42 year old police officer, died at the hospital because he was bludgeoned with a fire extinguisher. But there is other video footage. Some Capitol police took selfies with the mob. Why? Then there’s the National Guard. Why did the Pentagon not respond to calls for more National Guard deployments, for example from Maryland

Governor Larry Hogan? What was Kash Patel doing? Kash Patel is a Trump loyalist who is the Acting Secretary of Defense.<sup>1</sup> Trump picked him to replace Mark Esper from that role after he fired Esper on November 9. Why did the Pentagon put limits on the Washington DC National Guard the day before the insurrection, like not giving them riot gear, telling them not to interact with protestors unless in self-defense, telling them not to use National Guard surveillance tools without the Defense Secretary's explicit sign-off?<sup>2</sup>

Finally, were there special forces in the mob? Why did some in the mob seem to go after journalists? For example, *New York Times* photographer Erin Schaff entered the building as journalists cover protests. Three unidentified men in black surrounded her. They threw her to the floor, ripped away her press ID pass and a camera, broke a lens on another camera, and ran off.<sup>3</sup> What about all the men with tactical gear? One man appeared on video with flexcuffs or zip ties, which are special non-metal handcuffs. He was completely disguised and wore a cap to cover his eyes. At least some in the mob planned to take hostages, or worse. There was a homemade bomb in the Capitol Building, and pipe bombs placed outside the headquarters of the DNC and RNC buildings. Who built them? Where did this equipment come from? Did

---

<sup>1</sup> Warren P. Strobel and Nancy A. Youssef, "White House National Security Council Aide Is Named to Top Pentagon Post," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 10, 2020; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/whitehouse-national-security-council-aide-is-named-to-top-pentagon-post-11605037916>. Kash Patel was an aide to Devon Nunes (R-CA) who tried to find fictional dirt on Joe Biden in Ukraine.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Sonne, Peter Herman, and Missy Ryan, "Pentagon Placed Limits on D.C. Guard Ahead of Pro-Trump Protests Due to Narrow Mission," *Washington Post*, January 7, 2021; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-protests-washington-guardmilitary/2021/01/07/c5299b56-510e-11eb-b2e8-3339e73d9da2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-protests-washington-guardmilitary/2021/01/07/c5299b56-510e-11eb-b2e8-3339e73d9da2_story.html) writes:

"The Pentagon placed tight limits on the D.C. National Guard ahead of pro-Trump protests this week, trying to ensure the use of military force remained constrained, as the Guard carried out a narrow, unarmed mission requested by the city's mayor to help handle traffic ahead of planned protests. In memos issued Monday and Tuesday in response to a request from the D.C. mayor, the Pentagon prohibited the District's guardsmen from receiving ammunition or riot gear, interacting with protesters unless necessary for self-defense, sharing equipment with local law enforcement, or using Guard surveillance and air assets without the defense secretary's explicit sign-off, according to officials familiar with the orders. The limits were established because the Guard hadn't been asked to assist with crowd or riot control."

<sup>3</sup> Eliz Mizon, "These Are All The Attacks On Journalists At The Capitol Riots," *Medium*, January 8, 2021; <https://medium.com/chompsky/these-are-all-the-attacks-on-journalists-at-the-capitol-riots-391ac6ed678d>. See also Twitter, Kashmir Hill, January 8, 2021; <https://twitter.com/kashhill/status/1347514703589892098>. See also Brittany Shamas, "Journalists Were Attacked, Threatened and Detained During the Capitol Siege," *Washington Post*, January 9, 2021; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/media/2021/01/09/he-was-documenting-chaotic-scene-when-suddenlytrump-supporters-turned-their-ire-him/>. Jordan Williams, "Journalist Accounts, Footage Suggest They Were Targeted in Capitol Riot," *The Hill*, January 8, 2021; <https://www.msn.com/enus/news/politics/journalist-accounts-footage-suggest-they-were-targeted-in-capitol-riot/ar-BB1cAuqb>.

disgraced General Michael Flynn play a role?<sup>4</sup> Or hired mercenaries with security firm Blackwater? Remember Trump pardoned four Blackwater agents for their random and ruthless killings in Afghanistan.

### **The Leadership of President Trump**

Whatever conspiracies turn up or not, one fact remains: This mob violence was encouraged, incited, and directed by President Donald J. Trump, more than a few members of the Republican Party, right-wing media, and Trump-supporting Christians. And here the issue of hope comes up: We hope for good leaders. So what do we do when leaders fail? Either because they are narcissistic, or even when they are just fallen, flawed human beings? *What can we learn from this? What do we learn about leadership and our own hopes for leadership?*

Let's be on the same page. Immediately before this mob marched down from the White House to the Capitol Building, Trump addressed them, telling them that the election had been stolen from them, that they should never give up, that they should be strong and not weak, that they should pressure weak Republicans in the Senate to not accept the certified electoral votes from the States, and that they should pressure Vice President Mike Pence to do something unconstitutional and unheard of. Rudy Giuliani said he wanted a "trial by combat." While the whole mob scene went down, Trump and his family and aides watched the whole thing on TV, clearly enjoying what he saw.

Then, a few hours later, maybe because he was pressured by others or maybe because he wanted to have an excuse in court, or both, Trump made a video and released it on social media. In it, he spoke to the rioters and rebels. He repeated the lie that the election was stolen from him and them. Then he said, "We love you. You're very special. I know how you feel." And he does. He knows how they feel, because *he told them what to feel*. He told them that they should feel robbed of an election. Since November 3, he had every opportunity to present his case in courts of law, where there are actual standards, and actual consequences for lawyers if they lie to judges. But since he lost 60 court cases and drove away any competent lawyers, Trump pressed his case in the court of public opinion, because he could lie and face no immediate consequences.

Now there are people who would ask, "But how can you be so sure that the election was fair enough to be accurate?" Because Trump and his team in court already tried to overturn the sheer number of votes in the swing states, and none of their claims legally held up, logically held up, and numerically held up. Look at who recognizes these facts: Republican Senator Ben Sasse of

---

<sup>4</sup> Roger Sollenberger, "Recently Pardoned Michael Flynn Calls on Trump to 'Suspend the Constitution' and Re-Do the Election," *Slate*, December 3, 2020; <https://www.salon.com/2020/12/02/recentlypardoned-michael-flynn-calls-on-trump-to-suspend-the-constitution-and-re-do-election/> writes:

"Flynn's Twitter account shared a press release from a Tea Party-affiliated organization called the We the People Convention (WTPC), calling for the outgoing president to invoke martial law "to allow the U.S. Military to oversee a new free and fair federal election" if state legislatures, courts and congress do not overturn his defeat."

Nebraska,<sup>5</sup> Trump fan-boy Andrew McCarthy at the conservative *National Review*, who was an attorney for the Southern District of New York,<sup>6</sup> and even Trump-loyalist William Barr in the Justice Department with the powers of the FBI and CIA said that even if there was some voter fraud, it was nowhere near the level that it could come close to overturning the Biden lead in any of the swing states. So that's how we can be sure.

So why did eight Republican Senators like Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz say that they wanted to contest the votes? And what about the 147 Republicans in the House of Representatives? Why would they do that? Doesn't it mean that there is some truth to Trump's claim? No. It is likely they were using it as a fundraising strategy. Both Hawley and Cruz and others want to keep Trump donors.<sup>7</sup> How do I know that? Because even if the Senate Republicans had blocked the vote certification in the Senate -- which they didn't because the top Senate Republican Mitch McConnell accepted Biden's win -- but even if they had blocked the vote count, the issue would have gone over to the House of Representatives, into the domain of Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats. There was no way that this stunt was going to succeed. Unless a physical attack on the Capitol could intimidate and rattle people so much.

And intimidation is the name of the game. Also on Wednesday, in Michigan, the State House received a bomb threat. In Utah, the Governor and his staff had to evacuate the State House. In Georgia, the Secretary of State had to be evacuated because of armed protesters. In Arizona, protesters brought out an actual guillotine in front of the State House. In Kansas, protesters stormed the State House there and said they'd be back armed this weekend. In Washington, the Governor's residence had its gates broken down, grounds stormed by armed men, and state police had to be called in; they did not arrest anyone even though protesters broke down the gates. What a contrast to the way police treated BLM protesters.<sup>8</sup> The FBI has already been saying for years that white supremacist violence is the #1 domestic terrorism threat and also that white supremacists have infiltrated local police departments. Various groups appear to be threatening more violence as January 20th approaches.

---

<sup>5</sup> Facebook, Senator Ben Sasse, December 30, 2020; <https://www.facebook.com/SenatorSasse>.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew McCarthy, "When Vote Fraud Is Claimed, Question Always Is: Did It Make a Difference?" *National Review*, November 4, 2020; <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/11/when-vote-fraud-is-claimed-question-always-is-did-it-make-a-difference/> and Andrew McCarthy, "Trump's Vote-Count Lawsuits: The Election Endgame," *National Review*, November 9, 2020; <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/11/trumps-vote-count-lawsuits-the-election-endgame/>. See also Melissa Quinn, "'Yet the President Persists': Georgia's Top Election Officials Refutes Trump Claims," *CBS News*, January 5, 2021; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-georgia-call-house-democrats-fbi-investigation/> for comments about reputed video of paper ballots being shredded.

<sup>7</sup> Katelyn Caralle, "AOC Slams Ted Cruz as a Liar with Blood on His Hands for Fundraising During the MAGA Riot as He Tried to Overturn Joe Biden's Victory - After He Claimed He Was 'Just Doing His Job'," *UK Daily Mail*, January 7, 2021; <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9123831/Cruz-claimsdoing-job-trying-overturn-Bidens-victory-MAGA-mobs-rampage.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Maggie Koersch, "The Police's Tepid Response to the Capitol Breach Wasn't an Aberration," *FiveThirtyEight*, January 7, 2021; <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polices-tepid-response-to-thecapitol-breach-wasnt-an-aberration/>.

In many ways, this reminds us of Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898 when a white mob overthrew democratically elected black leaders or like Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921 when a white mob destroyed black success. So, for those who say this is not who we are as Americans, that's not accurate, unfortunately. I can appreciate that as an aspiration. But it is who we are. Those people who stormed the Capitol Building on Wednesday were wearing clothes that said 6MWE, which means 6 Million Wasn't Enough -- referring to Hitler's massacre of 6 million Jews. One rioter wore a hoodie that said, "Camp Auschwitz." They made nooses to represent lynching, out of ropes and camera cords. They did this now that American voters elected the first black woman to the VP role, who is also the first woman to the VP role, and only the second Catholic to the Presidency, and they keep calling them "the radical Left." When you look at their policy positions, they are anything but radical. Perhaps it's also because, on January 5th, Georgia elected its first ever black Senator, Reverend Raphael Warnock, and also Jon Ossoff, a young Jewish investigative reporter who once worked for John Lewis. But when you dress up your political opponents like monsters, of course that justifies any actions you take in response, including violence. Like another Trump lawyer, Lin Wood, going on Parler and saying that Mike Pence should be first in front of a firing squad.<sup>9</sup> And to these actions, the President says, "We love you; you are special; I know how you feel."

There are consequences that are unfolding. Facebook and Twitter have banned Trump. So if Trump is looking for a new social media outlet, we might see him on TikTok, any day now. Or Parler, if Parler survives. There are legal consequences. House Democrats will move to impeach Trump on Monday. Arrests have begun. Investigations are underway. Such as what to do about Trump's phone call to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, "I just want to find 11,780 votes."<sup>10</sup> That was election fraud. Were there more phone calls like that?

### **Relevance**

So what do we do now? And I don't mean what do we do to just move on, or just survive this. Jesus calls us to hope in him, and that includes him as a leader and that includes what he is doing by his Spirit to bring all people into a conviction of sin, into the truth, and into confessing him as Lord. So in times like this, we do not just try to forget about the last four years and the people who characterized it as soon as they are off Twitter. We do not pick a side and gloat about retaliation. We stand for truth, and truth in Jesus.

There are eternal consequences at stake for people. If ever we needed a picture of hell, we are seeing it. People can become so addicted to power that stripping them of power feels like torment, even though it is meant to be humanizing. People can believe lies so deeply that confronting them with truth feels like torment, even though it is an invitation to regain their right minds. People can become so resistant to sharing good things -- like space in this country -- with others, that Pentecost feels like torment, even though when people of every tribe and tongue worship Jesus together, we are only becoming who Jesus called us to be (Revelation 5:7). When

---

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Shieber, "Parler Reportedly Removed Posts by Trump Affiliate Lin Wood Calling for Execution of VP Mike Pence," *Yahoo! Finance*, January 9, 2021;

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/parlerreportedly-removed-posts-trump-232421829.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Melissa Quinn, "'Yet the President Persists': Georgia's Top Election Officials Refutes Trump Claims," *CBS News*, January 5, 2021; <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-georgia-call-house-democrats-fbiinvestigation/>.

people who don't want reconciliation are offered a process of reconciliation, they get even more mad. When people who don't want to admit their guilt are offered a chance to change their hearts, confess their guilt, and receive forgiveness, they get even more defensive. When people who hold up signs that say "Jesus Saves" yet clutch the very sins that Jesus saves us from, then the real Jesus will feel like torment. Our God is a consuming fire, says the Scripture (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29). For people who want to be purified in God's fire, and have their sins burned away, that is good news. For people who want their sin, who want the very thing that God wants to burn away, they will feel the way petulant children feel who refuse to let go, and refuse to grow up.

So there are not just legal consequences. There are eternal consequences at stake for everybody, because at every moment, we are shaping ourselves. We can either stand under Jesus' truth more and more, or become self-deceived more and more. We can either stand with Jesus' love for all more and more, or become self-loving more and more. Jesus promised to return and complete the process of judgment that he began. But we are not there yet. Jesus promised to return and be the leader we hope for. But he hasn't returned yet.

So in the meantime, dare we hope? Dare we hope for *decent* leaders now? Maybe even *good* leaders? Or should we just hope to not have bad leaders? I'll talk in a few minutes about Georgia and what is hopeful there. But I want to help us process what we're seeing and reading on the news.

### **Text and Context**

I want to process the story of when God took the kingship away from King Saul in 1 Samuel 15. Here's some background. Now God has always wanted to be the loving, good king for all humanity. He came in Jesus to be that king, and to give his life to make us his people. Before Jesus came, there were kings of Israel who were meant to be pointers to Jesus, because Jesus is the ultimate king. In different ways, they were meant to reflect Jesus, but also graciously accept when their time was up, when Jesus came. King Saul was the first king of Israel. In those days, there was a prophet named Samuel. Prophets were also meant to reflect Jesus, because Jesus was the ultimate prophet who spoke for God. The prophet Samuel had anointed Saul to be king to defend them a few chapters before this because the people of Israel had wanted a human king (1 Sam.8). God said, "They already have me as king, and they are rejecting me." But God told Samuel to anoint Saul for the role to see if this could work out.

But by 1 Samuel 15, Saul has blown it. So in verses 10 - 11:

Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel (v.10)

Notice who comes to Samuel. "The word of the Lord." That is a person. Later in John's Gospel, we will learn that, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... the Word became flesh," (John 1:1 - 2, 14) and we now call him Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the anointing king. So when we read "the word of the Lord came to Samuel," it's not just God whispered in his ear, or in his mind. It is also that the Word of God who is the Word of the Father and Son of the Father, who reflects the Father perfectly (John 1:14

- 18; Matthew 11:25 - 27; Luke 10:21 - 24; Heb.1:1 - 3; Col.2:9; etc.), who wants to reign in human hearts -- that “word of the Lord” came to say:

“I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands.” And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the Lord all night. (v.11)

Now the details matter, but I’m going to summarize them in these points. First, Saul was not protecting the people, which was wrong; it was a failure of his basic duty. Second, Saul made greed for other people’s wealth to be a motivator for his army to fight for him, which was wrong; and so he opened the door to violence for the sake of wealth, war for the sake of profit, extortion in exchange for public service, quid pro quo everywhere as a basic of way of life. Third, Saul said by his actions that Israel could humiliate other people groups, which was wrong; God still loved other people even when they were attacking Israel, because Jesus would one day go to the realm of the dead where everyone who died before Jesus died waited, and Jesus gave them an opportunity to choose him (1 Peter 3:18 – 20; 4:6). Fourth, Saul performed a few religious rituals but not everything God commanded, which was wrong because it was religious manipulation. He just did enough to look like he was honoring God. Fifth, when the prophet Samuel confronted him, Saul lied and got defensive and blamed other people, which was wrong; he was not repentant, and he failed to lead and blamed the people for it. Does this sound like anyone we know?

The Word of God said, “No more.” In verses 22 - 23, the prophet Samuel said to King Saul,

“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices  
[religious performances like holding up a Bible for a photo op]  
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?  
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,  
And to heed than the fat of rams.  
For rebellion is as the sin of divination,  
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.  
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,  
He has also rejected you from being king.” (v.22 – 23)

“You have rejected the word of the Lord” -- the Word of God who would later come as Jesus to be king. So God rejected Saul “from being king.” And it was for Saul’s good. Because he was a fearful person before. You can read about that in the story. And in general, for fallen human beings, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Power had become Saul’s addiction and his way of dealing with his fear. So God took power from him. In the next chapter, God says to Samuel, “Go, anoint David to be king.” And after that, Saul fought it tooth and nail. It drove him mad. He became violent. Why? Because he had made the role his identity. He had made the power his identity. Does this sound like anyone we know?

But Saul should have known. And he should have read his Bible. And I don’t mean that facetiously. In the book of Genesis, and Saul was supposed to copy by hand all of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 17:18 - 20), so he should have

known this -- in the book of Genesis, God made a prophecy through Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, and said, that the true king of Israel will come *from the tribe of Judah* (Genesis 49:8 - 12). Was Saul from the tribe of Judah? No. He was from the tribe of *Benjamin*. So why would God say one thing and do another? It's because God always intended to tell Saul to step down as king and give the kingship to another. Probably David. Why would God do that? Isn't that mean? No! Because God wanted a leader who would step aside in obedience when God said it was time for another leader to lead. God wanted Israel's first experience of a king to be not a guy who wants to reign forever, or who wants to put his son in the role. God wanted someone who said, "It was my honor to serve You and the people; I'm grateful for the opportunity. And now it's time for me to show myself and all of you that the real king is the Word of God."

The real king is the Word of God as we see in Jesus. In the book of Revelation, what do we see? When Jesus comes again, he is called by what title? Well many, but especially "Word of God." This is Revelation 19:11 - 16:

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many [crowns]; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God... 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords." (v.11 - 13, 16)

One of the great sayings of the followers of Jesus is this: "He must increase, but I must decrease." It comes from John 3:30. He must increase, but I must decrease. Saul was never meant to be king for his whole life, or get to put his son on the throne. Why? Because he must increase, but I must decrease. And that's a good thing. So the only question Saul really had to answer was, "*How* do I want to decrease, not *whether*: *How*? So that the Word of God would increase?"

The only real answer for him and for us, is for the Word of God to fill our hearts, to light our path, to lead our lives. Our choice is still the same before Jesus. Will we let Jesus write his words on our hearts? (2 Corinthians 3; Jeremiah 31:31 - 34; Proverbs 3:3; 7:3; etc.) Because that is the way the Word of God reigns today. That is how we acknowledge our hope for a true leader, a king who will come to reign and judge justly, and make all things right. And people right now show whether we want him or not. That is the great sorting that is going on. We condition ourselves. We shape ourselves by whether we allow the Word of God to shape us.

### **Conclusion: Dare We Hope for Good Leadership?**

I want to conclude with a positive example of leadership, and why it is that it gives me hope, and why hope for good leadership is a good thing. Last week we talked about how hope can hurt. Sometimes it hurts to hope, because you desire things more. And then, you may get disappointed. And that question is especially poignant as we internally process what does it mean to hope for good leadership? The positive example I want to mention is Stacey Abrams. I want to play a video clip for less than 2 minutes that quickly explains why it is that it is so important to hope.



Cenk Uyghur: “Stacey Abrams -- after she lost that governor’s race [for Georgia Governor in 2018], a lot of people thought she should run for President. She decided not to and everybody was kind of curious about that. She was not promoting her own career. And people were like, “You’re nuts. You gotta get in there even if you lose. You get a lot of name recognition, and that winds up helping your career a lot. Go, go, go, go help your career. And she didn’t do it. She stayed home. And started a project to make sure everyone is registered and stays registered. And it arguably made all the difference for Joe Biden winning the election, let along these two Senate seats in Georgia [where Rev. Rafael Warnock and Jon Ossoff won]. So she might have single-handedly... well that’s way too strong; no one ever does it single-handedly... She might have been the singlemost important factor in the Democrats winning these races. And that’s exactly what a hero does.

Ana Kasparian: “Organizing matters. It matters.”

Ben Dixon: “And can I just say one more detail about that? See, what Stacey Abrams is doing -- this is why you guys should listen to black folks; I just gotta be quite candid -- what Stacey Abrams is doing is replicating the model that we have in the black community all the time. If we miss an opportunity or if we get an opportunity, we put someone else on. And we do that all the time before we do it for ourselves. And I remember how many people were upset with Stacey Abrams for not even running in the Senate race. But I think she had some wisdom that traces back to our ancestors. Where she understood that if she places herself in position to promote other people, she could do far more for this democracy than just elevating herself. That is part of our tradition.”<sup>11</sup>

That segment comes from *The Young Turks*, and Ben Dixon is the African American journalist who came after Cenk Uyghur who is Turkish American and Ana Kasparian who is Armenian American, which is a fascinating story by itself. Now I want to make clear that I’m so grateful for Reverend Warnock’s and Jon Ossoff’s wins not just because of representation but also because of their policy positions. What happened in Georgia is historic -- it is absolutely historic -- if only for the chance to get more COVID relief through to everyday Americans. And Stacey Abrams has a lot to do with it. And here’s why, for this moment, I want to mention my gratitude for her faith and her character. It’s because in the official Democratic Party, just like the official Republican Party, there is a tendency for people to fail upward. So once Stacey Abrams ran for governor of Georgia and lost, you could tell that she was being groomed for other political roles. And many people thought she should run for Senate or other things. But she didn’t. So not only did she take her defeat in stride, she was even more determined to lift other people up. And when Ben Dixon, the black journalist in this video clip, spoke about lifting other people up, and that being a deep cultural value, that is powerful. It is also a deep Jesus value. It’s what Jesus did and does.

---

<sup>11</sup> Cenk Uyghur, Ana Kasparian, and Ben Dixon, “How Stacey Abrams Flipped The Senate,” *The Young Turks*, January 7, 2021; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhZwxVAqWqU>; (0:00 to 1:35)

One way to interpret how God is moving in 2020 and 2021 is that in us, in many people, God is asking people all across the United States to deal with loss *with Him*. COVID has made us deal with loss. America's past wars and economic decline has made us deal with loss. Jesus is a leader who helps us deal with loss. If you look at the political leaders that this time has brought forth, it is also a season of leaders -- as we go into this year -- who have dealt with loss. Our troubles are not over. But it makes a huge difference that Stacey Abrams dealt with loss. That in different ways, Reverend Warnock and Jon Ossoff and Kamala Harris and Joe Biden dealt with profound losses. It seems to me that in Stacey Abrams' life, we see Jesus, because she said by her actions, "I must decrease, so he would increase." She is the opposite of King Saul and many other narcissists who have power. Ultimately because it is Jesus himself who dealt with loss. Jesus himself who said that he would decrease so that we would increase. Jesus did not grasp for power, but as Philippians 2 says,

6 He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of humans. And found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason, God highly exalted him, and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We hope for good leaders because we hope for Jesus. It is a good thing to hope. And Jesus leads us through loss and love. That is who he is. It is not yet who we are, fully. But by the grace of God, we must decrease, that he would increase.