

Our opening hymn asks us not to be afraid of some change.

But we have to ask, what kind of change? Changing our beliefs and attitudes about things? A new political regime? War? Another financial crisis and another great depression? The collapse of civilization? How about the end of the world?

I think I might be a little afraid of some of those things. How about you?

I must confess that I'm not a nostalgic person.

I don't long for the "good old days", perhaps because the good old days were also the "bad old days."

But I, and we – since we are mostly Boomers, survived the oil shocks and stagflation of the 1970's, major recessions in the 80's and 90's, the Great Recession of 2008, and a variety of other economic crisis along the way. At one point in the 1970's, the prime rate was over 21%.

And of course there were the many social changes and political crisis. The assassinations and riots of the Sixties. Vietnam. The great disco inferno. Small scale wars too numerous to mention. The end of the Cold War. The Swine Flu. Record-breaking droughts begin to appear in the 90's. The rise of the personal computer and internet. More genocides. Famines. The rise of China and India. 9/11. Iraq. Iran. Afghanistan. Mass shootings. Global warming and climate change. The war on terror. Gas hits \$5 a gallon. The Tea Party. Occupy Wall Street.

Most of us have probably forgotten about a lot of that.

But we lived through it, and here we are with our current wave of inflation and social instability. The Covid pandemic. The widespread adoption of the smart phone. The left versus right

culture war. Increasingly polarized tribal politics. Government deadlock. The rise of AI. Facebook. Twitter. TikTok. Ukraine. Storms and floods and rising sea levels and fires.

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my.

Looking even farther back, it seems like these kinds of things are pretty much the regular state of affairs for humanity. So what's the big deal?

I admit it's hard to keep that perspective when such events might affect us on an immediate personal level. Somewhere in the back of my mind is the thought that real people, our ancestors, our great-great-great-great grampas and grandmas, survived these kinds of things and much worse.

And they had kids and those kids had kids and so on, and here we are. We're the descendants of millennia of tough, creative, adaptable, persistent survivors. That's the gift they passed on to us. We too are creative, adaptable, persistent and tough.

Like them, we also must deal with the day to day impact of whatever the world brings to our doorstep.

And the world doesn't just bring us hard times. It brings good things as well. How many of us have had a hip or knee joint replaced, or heart surgery? How many of us can travel to far-off places in a matter of hours? How many of us can reach in our pocket or purse for a phone and call our kids or grandkids on the other side of the country?

Like the Paul Simon song says, These are the days of miracle and wonder.

And the truth is that miracles and wonders can be just as hard on us as wars and famines and plagues. Indeed, good times can tear us apart, while hard times can bring us together.

I'm reminded of the parable of the farmer and his horse.

*A farmer and his son had a beloved horse who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, "Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not."*

*A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild horses back to the farm as well. The neighbors shouted out, "Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not."*

*Later that week, the farmer's son was trying to break one of the horses and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The neighbors cried, "Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not."*

*A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all boys for the army. They did not take the farmer's son, because he had a broken leg. The neighbors shouted, "Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."*

These days it seems that everything must be cast in a binary light. Us versus them. Good versus evil. Oppressors or victims. My email inbox is filled with urgent messages to stop the latest outrage that will bring about the end of the world as we know it unless I send in my five bucks.

In our binary culture these days, it's tough not to get attached to things being "good" or "bad" – because that's easier for us, que no? It is easier for our brains to think in terms of good and bad rather than, "maybe so". But there's a calm in "maybe so" when you really think about it; there's a peace in not attaching to an outcome.

This is, of course, easier to do when things are going well.

But when things go south in your life, or you come across a conflict or struggle at work, or the world seems like it's going to hell and the commies or the fascists are taking over, the ability to *perceive* your situation in an unattached, objective "maybe so" way brings the promise that, at the very least, clarity, insight, and wisdom will follow you out the other side.

Buddhist and Daoist wisdom tells us that everything rises and everything falls away. Things turn into their opposites. Midnight is the seed of morning. Noon is the seed of night. Change is the only constant and we cannot know what it will bring.

We can only go with the flow, surfing the waves of change. We can't control events, only our response to them. It is better to embrace those changes than resist them.

In our Western heritage, this attitude comes to us through the concept of "amor fati" - a Latin phrase that may be translated as "love of fate" or "love of one's fate". This is the attitude in which we see everything that happens in our lives as happening for a reason, even if we don't know what that reason is.

If it happened, it was meant to happen, and I'm glad that it happened when it did. I'm going to make the best of it. I'm going to use obstacles and adversity as the means to grow and overcome and take me on to the next thing, whatever that may be.

It seems odd to love things we never wanted to happen in the first place. But what other, worse adversities might this one be saving us from? What might we learn from this unchosen experience? What good, equally unexpected events might result from it?

Admitting we don't know the answers or the outcomes allows us to treat each and every moment—no matter how challenging—as something to be embraced, not avoided. To not only be okay with it, but love it and be better for it. Even if it sucks at the time.

To love our fate is also to love the world.

In the words of Hannah Arendt: *What is most difficult is to love the world as it is. Loving the world means neither uncritical acceptance nor contemptuous rejection, but the unwavering facing up to and comprehension of that which is.*

To clearly see the world in all its terribleness and beauty, and love it still. We will fail at this. Our vision will dim, and our comprehension become confusion. Yet again and again we must return to the task of knowing and embracing reality with clear hearts and minds. And with a deep and abiding curiosity for what happens next.

Loving the world is no easy path. Few will take it. Yet I believe that those who do will arrive at a place of awe, and wonder, and joy. A place of calm in the midst of the whirlwind of life. The peace of “maybe so”.

Our faith calls us to travel that path together, learn from each other, encourage each other, to help each other when we tire or stumble. To remind each other to love the world and all things in it, no matter what.

Knowing that in the end, that love will be reflected back to us from every corner of the universe.