

In His Place



Putting our hearts in Jesus' heart; our hands in Jesus' hands; moving beyond thinking into the realm of doing

Seeing through Jesus' eyes

How many people can forget the image of the single Chinese student who stood in front of a tank during protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989? As the tank tried to maneuver around him, he would shift to remain in front of the tank. He stood there with no special weapon and dared the tank driver, who could so easily have run him over.

Read Luke 13:31-35 and think about how Jesus and this lone student were alike.

Pharisees come to Jesus to warn him that the "wicked king" Herod wants to kill Jesus because he was a troublemaker, who might be leading a revolution, and was threatening Herod's reign.

But Jesus could not be detoured from his path, he would continue his mission until it was completed: "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow and on the third day I finish my work."

Through Jesus' faithfulness to God he continues his mission, yet knowing that he will die in three days time. According to The Interpreter's Bible commentary Jesus relied on the doctrine of providence, knowing that those who obey are in God's care and that his appeal in Jerusalem would likely fail but the only honorable choice was to continue on the path set before him.

There is a story that Martin Luther King Jr. was sitting in his kitchen when he realized that if he continued to lead the Civil Rights Movement that he would die. But King continued to be the voice and face of the Civil Rights Movement, knowing that the path he was on was more important than his life.

Yet this call does not always claim the person's life. Think about Rosa Parks, who was just too tired to give up her seat on the bus, and was the spark that King needed to follow. She remained active her entire life and only recently died of natural causes.

It is this kind of courage that Jesus calls us to when he tells the Pharisees that he will continue his mission and it is this call that Parks, King and the Chinese student heard and followed. They are our modern-day prophets and some of us hear their call while others resist them.

Our question for today then is: How do we know who our prophets are? By what do we measure their cause, their courage?

In the commentary it says: "Without them we have no standard from God and no movement toward God; life stagnates into foulness, yet we kill the prophet. (God) would cure us, but we say, with sores upon us, 'We are not sick.'"

Take a moment and think about our society. What are some of the things that are wrong? What are our sicknesses? Is there somebody asking us to maintain the status quo, to "stay the course"? Is there somebody who has a plan to change the world's wrongs?

Now what is your role in changing the world? Are you to be the Rosa Parks, who serves as a spark? Are you to be King, who gave voice to the voiceless? Or are you to be one of the masses who lends strength to the prophets?

Second Week
of Lent
(Year C)

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalms 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

We are all gifts from God from family to society

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Abram has responded to God's call and traveled to the land near Jerusalem before God makes a covenant with Abram, who will later become Abraham. God promises Abraham protection reward and a biological heir. Not only this one heir but that Abram's descendants will be as many as the stars. "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them. ... So shall your descendants be." But not everybody receives this gift from God like Abraham and Sarah would in their old age.

As Methodists we recognize that "children are a gift from God to be welcomed and received. We recognize that some circumstances of birth make the rearing of a child difficult." In other words, we realize that there are times that the biological parent of a child may not be able to rear the child and in that instance, for the welfare of the child, the best decision may be to give the child up for adoption. In that case, we recognize the "agony, strength, and courage of the birth parent(s) who choose(s) in hope, love, and prayer to offer the child for adoption."

And we recognize that there are times when families that are capable of receiving this gift from God are not able to conceive or have families that have grown yet still have arms willing to hug a child born into circumstances they could not remain in and because of this we "affirm the receiving parent(s) desiring an adopted child. When circumstances warrant adoption, we support the use of proper legal procedures."

For those of us in community with either the biological parent who must give up their child or the family that is opening their hearts and homes, we are to celebrate the child as a gift of God just like Isaac was to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. We should share in the grief of the parent giving up their child, the joy of the family receiving the child and nurture that child in the community of Christian love.

¶ Book of Discipline 161-K

Becoming disciples

Monday

Read 2 Samuel 18:33 and Luke 13:34. How is David's lament over his son like Jesus' lament over Jerusalem? What would Jesus lament over if he could see our world as it is today?

Tuesday

Read Deuteronomy 32:11-12 and Luke 13:34. What does this image bring to mind about the relationship of God to us?

Wednesday

Read Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:9 and Galatians 3:6. What does it mean to be righteous like Abraham? Does righteousness come strictly from our faith or through our actions as well?

Thursday

"If it is not a tragic life we live, then I know not what to call it. Such a story as

Philippians 3:17-4:1

"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things." (verse 19)

Paul encourages the Philippians to communal living where they should live considering the welfare of all participants and he admonishes those who strive to live in a world that considers the rewards of an earthly realm above those of the heavenly realm. Paul urges us to dream of a time when our lowly bodies will become like Jesus' glorious body. Paul refers to the prosperous and gluttonous as "their god is their stomach."

But there is another group of people who are primarily concerned with their stomach and that is those people who live in extreme poverty. They are not concerned with filling their stomachs with rich foods but the basic needs to get them through another day. These basic needs are "food, clothing, shelter education, health care and other necessities."

As Methodists we recognize that "in spite of general affluence in the industrialized nations, the majority of persons in the world live in poverty. ... we do not hold poor people morally responsible for their economic state." This poverty often comes from more technology that is then used exploitively so that there are fewer jobs available.

The General Board of Church and Society is empowered by the church to advocate legislators for policies that promote "adequate income maintenance, quality education, decent housing, job training, meaningful employment opportunities, adequate medical and hospital care, and humanization and radical revisions of welfare programs."

The church calls on employers to pay employees a living wage so that they do not have to rely on food stamps or welfare for their livelihood and to this end the board is supporting an increase in the federal minimum wage. Join the effort through the Web site: <http://www.umc-gbcs.org>.

¶ Book of Discipline 163-E

that of Jesus Christ, — the history of Jerusalem, say, being a part of the Universal History. The naked, the embalmed, unburied death of Jerusalem amid its desolate hills — think of it." — Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*.

Do you agree that life is tragic? What keeps our life from being tragic?

Friday

"We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

"We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family." — "Our Social Creed," paragraphs 2-3, from Book of Discipline 2004, pages 124-5.

Prayer

Morning

Dear God, it is safer for me to consider my self before the welfare of those around me. Help me to have the courage to stand up when you call on me. Amen.

Evening

Almighty God, through you great changes can be brought to this world. Help us to take our part in the changes in the way that you call us whether by speaking, standing up for others or helping those who stand in harm's way. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Psalm reading

Psalm 27

Write down a phrase that sticks out to you in the morning and carry it with you throughout the day. Think about it when you can.

If you are doing journaling write your thoughts about the phrase at night.

Pick a new phrase each day.