

“Just Say No To Economic Injustice”

Psalm 9:9-20

1 Samuel 17:32-49

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

Jesus consistently challenged the disciples to put their beliefs into practice. In Mark 4:40, Jesus responds to the disciples’ plea for help in the storm. Jesus replied, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?” Martin Luther King, Jr, in his April 16, 1963, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, writes,

Injustice anywhere is a threat. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.¹

I think the disciples thought it was an injustice that Jesus was sleeping on a cushion in the stern of the boat. What’s with that? Go figure, Jesus was fine, and they were fearful of losing their lives. Ah, at least they spoke up. Jesus moved them from belief to action. And Jesus invites us to engage the other side.

Moving belief into action is imperative. You recall the story of David and Goliath. 1 Samuel 17:32 reads, “David said to Saul, Let no one’s heart fail because of him [Goliath]; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” Psalm 9:9 reads, “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” 2 Corinthians 6:8-10 reads, “We are treated as imposters, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always

¹Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters To A Birmingham Jail: A Response To The Words And Dreams Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2014), 20.

rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” Such is the plight and blessing of Christians to put their belief that God is present in all things and move faith and beliefs into action with the marginalized, suffering and oppressed. Our call is to engage injustice in all its forms. Ponder these key Christian beliefs. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Love God and love others. Mourn with others. Endure persecution for doing the right thing. Serve the least because your serving Jesus.

The Gospel reading in Mark 4 asks us to hear Jesus’ words, “Peace! Be still!” quieting the storm. We are to put them into action, quieting the storms in everyday life. In the storms in our lives and in the lives of those around us, we can rediscover our faith in the power of Jesus’ words to the wind and sea, “Peace! Be still!” Yes, unjust realities confront us every day. The current discussions on race, the Juneteenth Federal Holiday, immigration, economic equity, and equality, both personally and as a government, all have a theme of injustice. The storms rage, but Jesus states, “Peace! Be still!” When we put our faith, our beliefs into practice it is not faith that God will protect us, but faith and beliefs that conquer fear and secure us in God’s promise that death has been defeated and will never win. The storms outside aggravate the storms within. Each of us might want to acknowledge our fears and let Jesus speak those words, “Peace! Be still!”²

Six years ago, Friday, June 19, Dylann Roof was charged with nine counts of murder and bond was set at \$1,000,000. In this initial hearing, Roof faced families of

²In the two paragraphs of textual analysis above, I have benefited from the thinking of Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, J. Scott Hudgins, Eunjoo Mary Kim, Scot McKnight, Dan R. Dick, William Greenway, and David J. Schlafer in Joel B. Green, Thomas G. Long, Luke A. Powery, Cynthia L. Rigby and Carolyn J. Sharp, editors, *Connections, Year B, Volume 3* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 89-93, 93-95, 96-99, 100-102, 102-103, 104-106 and 106-107.

some of the nine people he was accused of killing and heard words of forgiveness. At the bond hearing, Dylann Roof stood motionless while listening to the anguished words of relatives of victims he allegedly gunned down Wednesday night at a Bible study meeting at the historic Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. “I will never be able to hold her again, but I forgive you,” a daughter of Ethel Lance said. “And may God have mercy on your soul. ...God forgives you, I forgive you.”³ Dylann Roof received justice for his crimes. He also was offered forgiveness by his victims. Bryan Loritts cites John Perkins when John realized he, like Martin Luther King Jr., could be accused of wrongdoing by supporting the Voting Rights Act of 1963; “I knew that if I didn’t forgive, I would be overcome by the same darkness. I purposed at that moment to preach the gospel strong enough to win whites and blacks—to burn through the bigotry and hatred of racism.”⁴

Put your faith into action, personally and with others. Engage the other side. Injustice is. Perhaps economic inequity is the foundation of all injustice. Jesus addressed economic inequity in the first century, and we are to do the same as his followers. The storm within and without needs to be calmed. Receive and act on Jesus’ words, “Peace! Be still!” Amen.

This sermon was preached (In-Person with COVID-19 protocols and Livestream due to the Coronavirus) on Sunday, 20 June 2021 by the Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh in the Sanctuary at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Laguna Woods, California

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³Adapted from a CNN report on www.cnn.com, June 19, 2015.

⁴Bryan Loritts, ed., *Letters To A Birmingham Jail: A Response To The Words And Dreams Of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 44.