



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION, PALM SUNDAY APRIL 10, 2022
ISAIAH 50:4-9a; PSALM 31; 9-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; LUKE 19:28-40

LET THE SAME MIND BE IN YOU THAT WAS IN CHRIST JESUS

Philippians 2:5-11 [Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.]

A few days ago, my oldest child, Thom, told me a kid he knew from high school had been shot and killed. This is the third kid he's known since the Fall of last year, shot and killed in Seattle. He didn't know any of these kids

particularly well, but he feels the grief around and about him, has an ever-growing awareness of the presence of guns and violence in his spaces, and is awake to the reality that more of distance – and he knows that whether

you're in the former group or the latter is largely an accident of your birth, the degree of social, racial, or economic privilege (amongst others) that you've been born into.

As I sat with Thom, and as he talked, I noticed my cultural inheritance storm into the foreground of my mind. I was angry. Who did this? Who shot a 17-year-old kid? Why wasn't he kept safe? ... I got all caught up in thinking about *who's to blame and what's to be done?* My mind fills up with opinions and rants about Law and Order, crime and punishment. If only we could be better, do better at this, then we'd all live in a safer, less dangerous society. Who's in charge, who's failed here? Who needs to be held accountable? Someone needs to do something, someone somewhere needs to do be doing a better job, needs to change things, make things better. Whose fault is this?

My cultural context is all about power, who has it, the constant striving to get it, working to hold on it, using it to defend the power you already have. I've been shaped to respond to anything that destabilizes, that

threatens, with power. This power, this cultural power, it's a power that dominates, that *overpowers*. It's the power of Empire.

Earlier we heard the words of an ancient hymn from Philippians:

at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,

and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,

My ancestors were Christians, I'm sure they thought of themselves as faithful Christians. Yet they recruited and put to use the terrible power they held and believed was theirs by right, forcefully imposing, demanding their beliefs of all. Their Christianity, distorted as it was by the Imperial and Colonial power they held, where the ends justify the means, that use of power resulted in genocide, enslavement, land theft, cultural suppression, in great suffering – the very terrible impacts of which continue to be the real, lived, dangerous, and impacted reality of so much of the world today. It's hard, it's

painful, to understand how they ever thought that such actions were a right response to Paul's exhortation:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

As I sat with my boy this week, as I sat with the story of Christ's passion this week, I wanted to rise up and call on that dominant, Imperial power to crush the perpetrators of violence in our society.

... and I caught myself. I thought about Christ's journey to Jerusalem, the person he was, the *way* he taught, the *way* he healed, the people he traveled with, and I thought about the sermon we heard in this place just last week: The Rev Dr Bradley Hauff, indigenous missionary of the Episcopal Church sharing with us the importance of relationship for the Lakota people, he told us "matakwe oyasin" we are all related...

... I caught myself. I set aside my inherited instinct to rise up and assert power over, choosing instead to sit – to sit with my boy, and be with him, fully present. I was upset at his news, he was

upset as he processed the facts, and somewhere in Seattle the family and friends of the boy shot to death are dealing with crushing, unimaginable, unbearable pain. And we are all related.

My better response to this pain and grief was to come alongside it, to sit with it and in it, to feel the discomfort of it – not, in that moment, to be thinking of all the ways power could be deployed as a solution, thinking that something productive is always the best response.

There *is* work of justice to be done, yes, but that work, that transforming work when done in the name of Jesus, must, surely, be done differently to the way I've been taught by Empire, by my dominating, colonizing ancestors. Instead, Jesus' life and ministry teaches us that the work of justice is the slow work of relationship, of being with, of listening, of sitting together in the pain; and then it is the slow, necessary work of transformation through continued relationship – and all of it, for love.

This Holy Week and beyond, *Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus*, and may we always remember: **we are all related.**



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