

Text Matthew 10:40-42; Jeremiah 28:5-9  
Theme The Jesus-Way  
Subject Following Jesus (prophet and righteous)  
Occasion 4<sup>th</sup> after Pentecost – June 28, 2020 – New Song ECUSA via ZOOM – Coralville, Iowa

This morning based on the OT and Gospel readings, I am talking about The Jesus-Way

These readings have drawn my attention to some social systems:

- Male Privilege (misogyny)
- White Privilege (racism)
- Wealth Privilege (classism/elitism)

*Systemic Sexism, Systemic Racism, Systemic Greed*

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Today's reading from Matthew 10 picks up from last week where Rabbi Jesus taught,  
**“Don't think that I've come to bring peace ...; I haven't come to bring peace, but a sword.”** (v.34)

Jesus is announcing, according to Matthew, the *kingdom of heaven* is bringing turbulence  
[I remind you, Matthew's theme is put on the lips of John the Baptist  
**"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has (approached)."** (3:2)

This is the good news from Matthew, our story teller

**the kingdom of heaven has (approached)** – *already but not yet*

*SO CLOSE – SO NEAR – on its way*

- Jesus is bringing it
- Jesus tells his disciples: BRING IT
- Jesus calls all his followers (us): BRING IT]

Jesus is bringing the *kingdom of heaven*

So, what's with **I haven't come to bring peace, but a sword.** (v.34b)  
the **sword** thing?

The Jesus-Way is disrupting the *status quo* – disrupting PAX ROMANA

The good news: Jesus, *as if wielding a sword*, is disrupting deadly systems

Disrupting what is TAUGHT, LEARNED and SUSTAINED

Whatever **excludes, diminishes, removes**

People were noticing

the JESUS-WAY is not *the way* they do things in those parts

Everyone seems to just wanna get along

The coming *kingdom of heaven* will disrupt any life that is not welcoming and hospitable

BACK THEN

NOW

TOMORROW

Jesus disrupts a world drunk with privilege & hierarchies  
a world sick with greed & power

- Supposing wealth brings privilege
- Supposing dark-skinned people are lesser: could be sold and owned
- Supposing women are subordinate, functionary and dependent

*[Even Matthew is uncomfortable with this disruption  
He edits the first beatitude to read:  
**Blessed are the poor in spirit, (5:3)**  
Luke reports it plain – STRAIGHT OUT  
**Blessed are you who are poor (6:20b)]***

This counter-culture Jesus-Way mission is risky and dangerous

Jesus is *bringing conflict* to trusted relationships:

Parents and children; others in the house

Jesus *asks for full allegiance* (cf. 10:35-38)

Take up the cross and follow **OR be found unworthy**

**I've ... come to bring ... a sword**

Let this word live – don't fight it – go with it

POOR PEOPLE MATTER

BLACK LIVES MATTER

WOMEN MATTER

Yes, yes, - everybody matters

Until it's clear – like now

**some have NOT mattered for too long**

Rabbi Jesus is teaching “**welcome**” in our reading.

**Whoever welcomes you welcomes me**

Prophets, righteous ones, little ones – WELCOME

Listen again carefully **Whoever / welcomes / you / welcomes / me**

We are following Jesus

**we have become the prophets we are the righteous ones**

We are God's provocative, discomfoting, and truth-telling messengers

We've extended hospitality to others: a room, a meal, some cash

- less privileged – Shelter House, Free Lunch, DVIP
- or radical ones who *say what we think but don't say* – guest lecturer
- the ones who actually *walk the talk we talk* – missionaries and candidates

Rabbi Jesus is an inviting us to re-examine our cozy relationship with power,

Re-define our place in the wide world Jesus loves.

Jeremiah knows what this is like

Today's reading from Jeremiah is one relatively well known

**As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes true, then it will be known the LORD has truly sent the prophet." (28:9)**

Did Hananiah's prophecy come true?

he announced God broke the power of the Babylonians; the exile is over; everything the people have lost is about to be restored,

this is exactly what the people want to hear: hard times are over!

Hananiah's message is one of nationalist hope, divine favor, and easy victory.

*"Don't worry; be happy now."*

Jeremiah, the "weeping-prophet" condemns Hananiah's prophecy: false; dangerous.

Israel's true prophets have prophesied war, famine, and pestilence.

They dared to tell God's people hard and holy truths.

Consequences for unfaithfulness

- Hard truths about the need for repentance.
- Hard truths about the high cost of justice.
- Hard truths about patience, longsuffering, and sacrifice.

Jesus' ministry is in the company of the prophets – he works from the margins

Jesus invites his followers (us) to a life flowing from humility and vulnerability

*Nothing* complacent or comfortable

This may seem odd to you – the Jesus-Way coming from the edges, the margins  
outsiders challenging the narrative

FOR SURE, *there are those who held station and were changed:*

Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Saul become Paul to name 3

Has the sword Jesus brought to change us taken hold?

Have you been the prophet or the righteous one seeking welcome?

Can you speak truth to power?

Can you do the right thing in the face of opposition?

These past months I've been with a number of Christian communities

Joining their worship via ZOOM or YouTube or Facebook

I've been with a couple doing the 21-Day challenge

Reading, listening or viewing resources to understand racism & white privilege

Consistently these pre-dominantly white groups consider themselves "GIVENS"

Our congregation or our group – GIVEN

Wondering how they might engage Black people and People of Color

Well intended and willing – wanting to be part of the change

Some have considered joining a group dedicated to confronting racism

- But *it would* cost some money
- But *it would* mean another meeting
- But *it would* mean learning from Black people which would mean asking them to do our work

Not one group suggested merging or partnering with a predominantly Black congregation

No one suggested the way of humility and vulnerability

Joining Bethany AME or New Creation International if only for a while

Consider then these questions from the text:

What is it to receive the reward of the prophet?

What is it to receive the reward of the righteous?

What is the reward preserved for giving a drink of water to one of the little ones?

This takes me to a recent reminder about *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

The presumption is we don't attempt to satisfy a need at one level until our needs at the lower levels are somewhat satisfied

FIRST, we are motivated to fulfill our physiological needs—  
food, water, shelter, and sleep.

THEN we are motivated to feel secure and safe from potential dangers.

NEXT, we are motivated to have friends, a sense of belonging.

FINALLY, our concern is self-esteem: earning self-respect, feeling worthwhile.

That's the top of this "*need hierarchy*"

self-actualization or sensing the achievement of one's full potential: *Ta Da - ME.*

Maslow revised his hierarchy near the end of his life

adding an ultimate achievement at the top—**SELF-TRANSCENDENCE.**

When we reach beyond our own self-interests and contribute to the needs of others.

The Jesus-Way:

life beyond the sustaining systems toward self-actualization & personal fulfillment

Matthew reports self-transcendence in chapter 25

**Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'** (25:37-40)

This is not "works righteousness"

This is **RIGHTEOUSNESS AT WORK**

Follow Jesus as a prophet and as a righteous one

Binging the kingdom of heaven

Jesus said **I've ... come to bring ... a sword**

The Jesus-Way is not about me

- POOR PEOPLE MATTER
- BLACK LIVES MATTER
- WOMEN MATTER

Change is coming

Follow Jesus

Join the chain reaction