



Flourishing 2024

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Exodus 14:13-14 (NIV)

Might Makes Right - A Story of Conflict

Of late, I cannot quit thinking about stories of conflict that I have both experienced and observed. Maybe it is because the current geo-political, national, cultural states of conflicts are waring to push out any shades of hope with me.

Yet, I cannot faithfully represent my vocational calling to a gospel of peace, hope, and love without screaming against the darkness of division, destruction, and depersonalization.

I'm reminded by those who are power enthusiasts who advocate that the Bible is filled with war and conquest stories, just look at David and Goliath or The Exodus or Revelations.

There does appear to be a symmetry to these conflict stories, however, that the motivations and outcomes were based in a primal justice narrative, i.e., slavery is always wrong, harm toward the weak is always wrong, power without justice is always wrong, might makes right is always wrong.

Memories take me into trauma-triggers: family conflict, sibling conflict, fighting as ritual, a loved one hiding from the law, women battered and abused in relationships, the hurt of never being good enough, the travel quest for freedom from violence and destitution, a community divided by hate – history – color, dehumanizing speech by one with authority, bullies on the playground and in the classroom and on the job site and in the church.

I flinch into fight for flight when startled, I cringe when power players threaten the peace of the many, it's a play my way or I'll take my marbles kind of game, it's cheered and imitated in sports - business - politics, it's called victory by any means, it's superiority over vulnerability. I was once reminded of the saying that "the church is the only organization that kills it wounded." It's crusades and crusaders justified by the quest to conquer.

So, what to do? There are options... fight back, hurt for hurt, hit and run, multiples of they deserve it, karma's a _itch, or just walk away. Resistance comes in many forms, but it always calls out for change and justice – for crossing over to a better world, for faith that acts.

During this season of Lent, I've been listening to the stories of Jesus and teachings of the early Christian community as remembered by those closest to the scene. Knowing that passivity is never justification for tolerating abusive behavior, we are left to struggle with what it means to be followers of an insurrectionist rabbi in a culture that admires power over solidarity. I want to endure, identify, advocate, oppose, push and shove. But I'm finally left with the wisdom that comes from the crucifixion of Jesus.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***

Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)

Join with me in celebrating our heritage and our vision as "People of the Chalice."

LOVE GOD! LOVE PEOPLE!

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