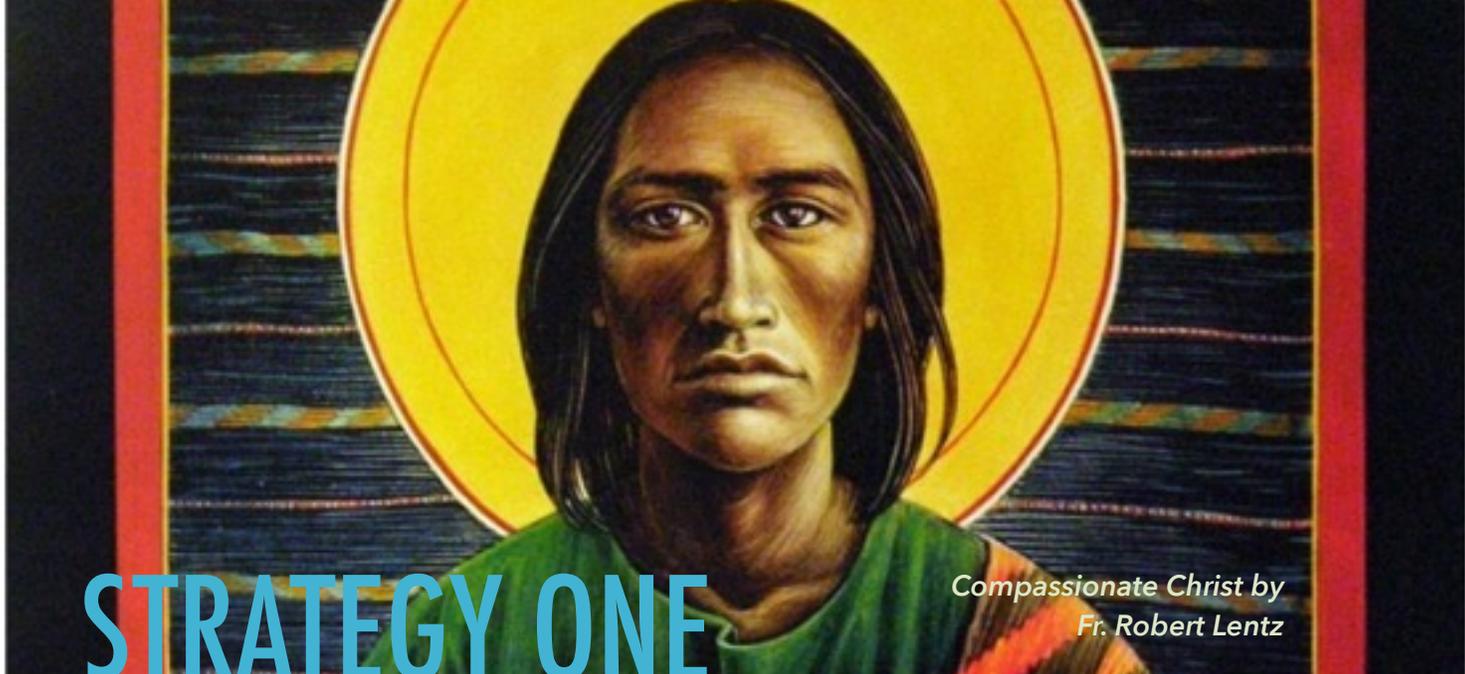


THE POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF JESUS

JANUARY 24, 2016 | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OAKLAND

Jesus of the People
—Janet McKenzie



STRATEGY ONE

Compassionate Christ by
Fr. Robert Lentz

TREAT THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS AS HOLY

"BY TELLING HIS DISCIPLES to bring the people's needs before God, Jesus taught them to treat the people's needs...with reverence and respect and special care. He made clear to them that using their strength, their gifts, their spiritual ministrations to make this a just world was the most important service they could render to God. He taught them to serve God by making sure that everyone has enough daily bread, that everyone is free from economic violence and exploitation, that everyone is delivered from the clutches of unjust kingdoms, principalities, and powers." (Hendricks, Obery, 2006-08-29. *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted*, Kindle Locations 1893-1897. The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.)

MATTHEW 6:9-13

Things to Notice:

1. Our Father - not My Father
2. Hallowed be Thy Name: We are ready for you now!
3. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done: No two kingdoms can exist in the same space and time. The arrival of God's kingdom means the Empire and the will of Caesar must go.
4. Give us our daily bread and forgive our debts: A radical call for redistribution of wealth and a refusal to participate in the

exploitation the Empire promotes. In Caesar's time only the "haves" had enough daily bread and only the powerful had the ability to forgive indebtedness

5. Lead us not into temptation: Help us resist the temptation to look to Caesar and the Empire as the object of our worship

How does Jesus treat people as holy?

How does this resonate with our world today?



*Black Jesus
(Artist Unknown)*

STRATEGY TWO

GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

“AS A STRATEGY, Jesus’ giving a voice to the voiceless through his demonstration at the Temple had several elements: 1) confronting those in power at the seat of their power to discredit their authority; 2) symbolically occupying the seat of power to discredit the myth of its invincibility; 3) maintaining control of the site long enough to be perceived as an actual challenge to the authorities’ power; 4) making all actions, gestures, and pronouncements dramatic enough to capture the people’s imagination; 5) leaving the site unscathed, if possible, as an inspiring show of strength.” (Hendricks, Obery, *Kindle Locations 2156-2162*)

MARK 11:15-19

The Temple:

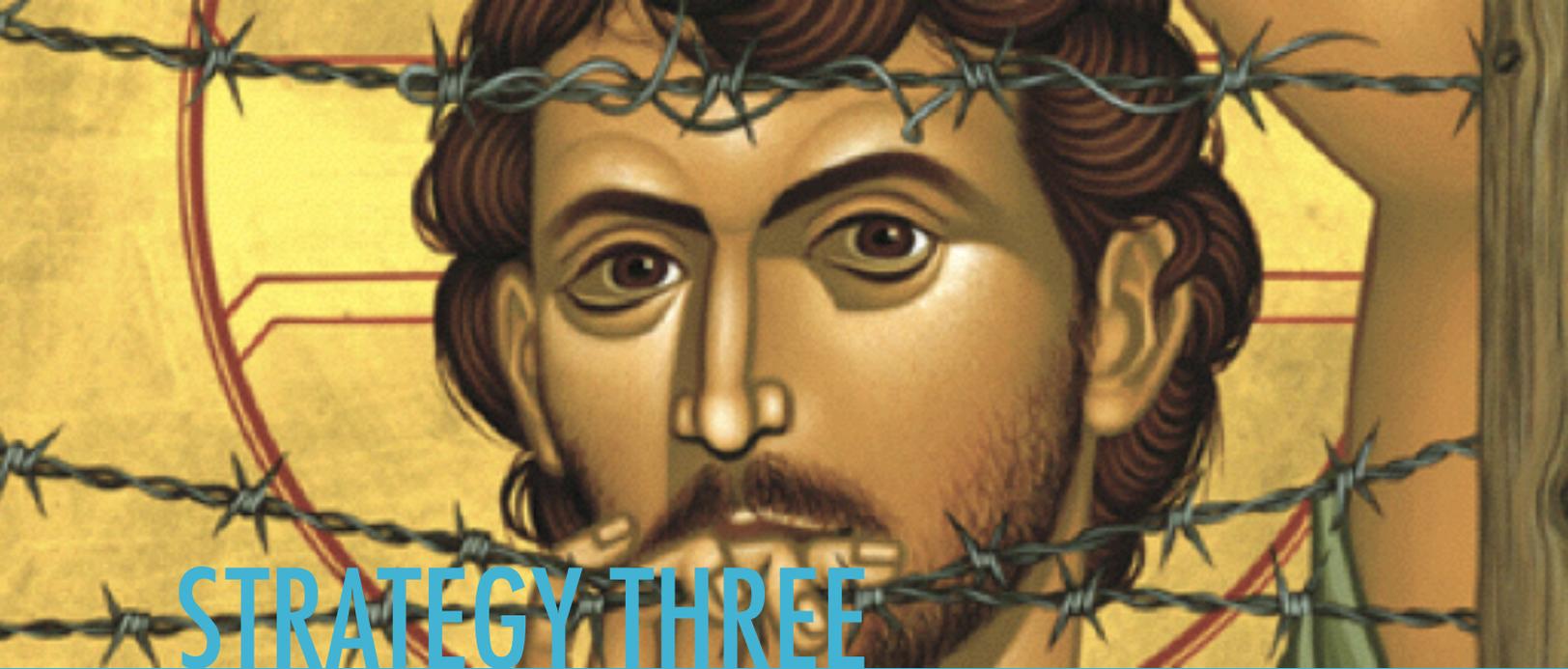
- Religious Center
 - ➔ ritual life
 - ➔ prophetic life
- Governing Institution for Israel
 - ➔ High priest and the Sanhedrin held court
- Center of Israel’s political life and power
 - ➔ Roman requirements met here, including pay taxes and arbitrate Roman law

- Center of Israel’s economy
 - ➔ served as central bank and treasury for Israel with immense wealth deposited

At the center of all of this is the priestly class - a highly privileged group of people who controlled the power and wealth of Israel. They secured their wealth and power from within the Temple itself..

Who does Jesus’ action support?

How does this resonate with our world today?



STRATEGY THREE

EXPOSE OPPRESSION

Christ of Mary Knoll
-Fr. Robert Lentz

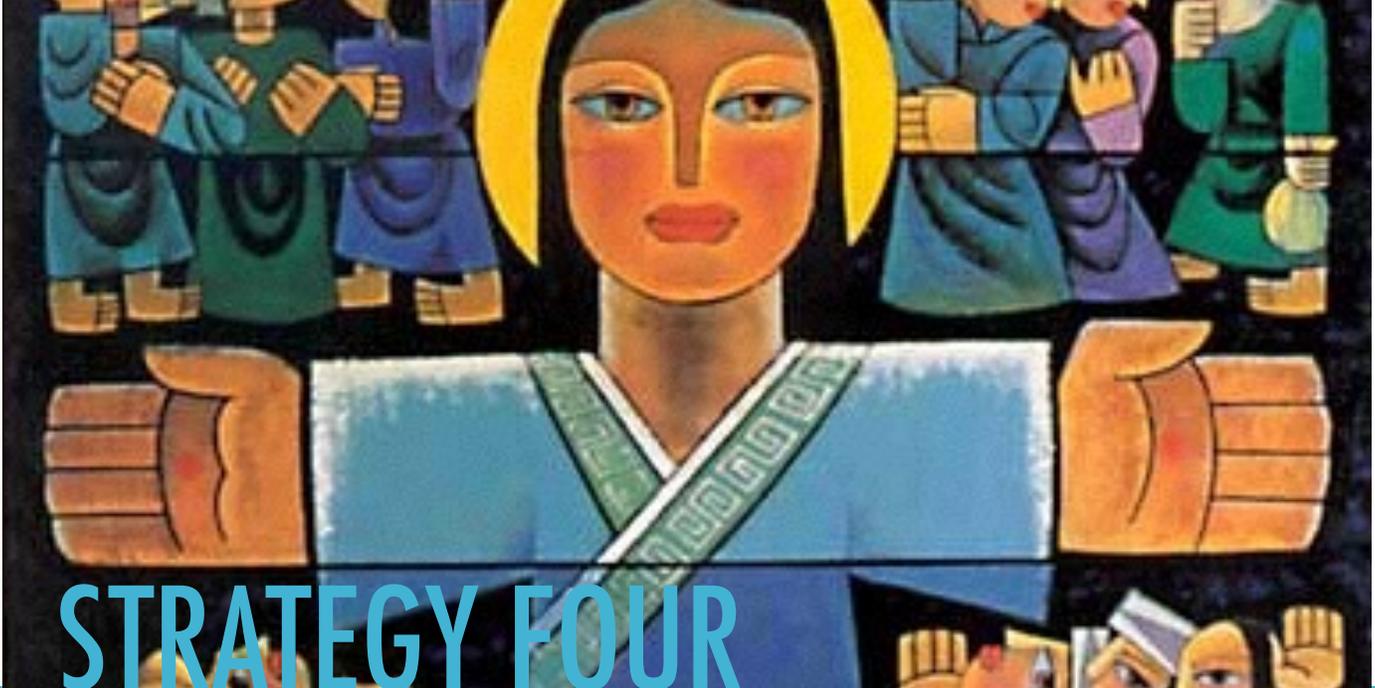
JESUS TREATS THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS as holy by seeking to raise their consciousness of the forces that hold them hostage to poverty and oppression and want...We must be unrelenting in our efforts to lay bare for all to see the factors that today hold people hostage: the corporate cronyism, the unjust tax policies that benefit the haves and the have-mores beyond all others, the unjust social and economic barriers to upward mobility, and the arrogance and duplicity of the modern-day corporate plantation owners and the politicians in cohorts with them who define good and evil not by the tenets of the biblical faith they profess to believe, but by whatever serves their own selfish interests. (Hendricks, Obery, Kindle Locations 2389-2394.)

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Setting the Stage:

- High unemployment (v. 3)
- Haughty, dismissive, insulting and exploitative landowner (v. 4, 6, 14)
- A denarius was the going rate for a daily wage, but it was not a living wage
- Plantation owner makes an example of the spokesperson by firing him

How does this resonate with our world today?



STRATEGY FOUR

CALL THE DEMON BY NAME

Christ Crucified
-HeQi

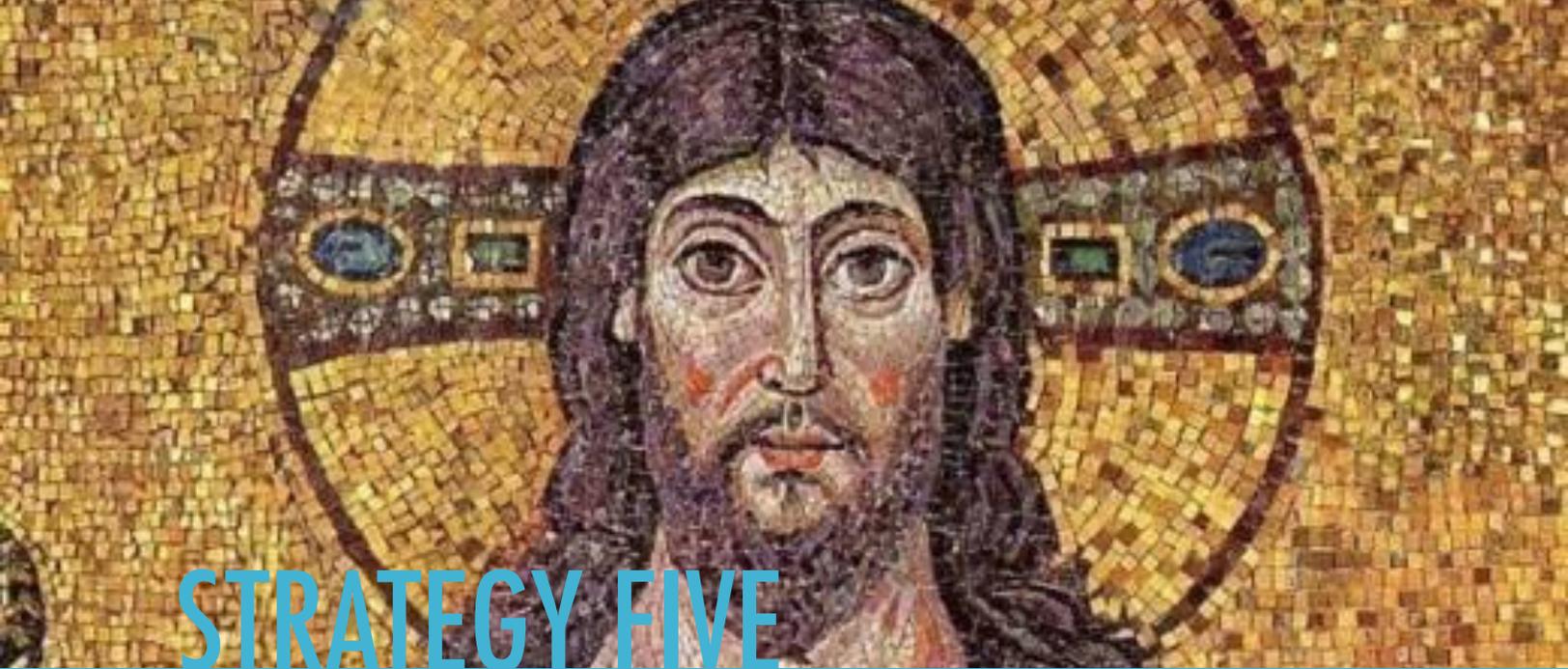
“WHAT JESUS’ RESPONSE in Mark 5 tells us is that in our quest to treat the people’s needs as holy we must be unfailingly prophetic. That is to say that we, too, must bring to light the true identity of the demons that cause the people’s suffering.” Hendricks, Obery, Kindle Locations 2556-2558.

MARK 5:1-10

Things to Notice

- Connections between the name “Legion” and the presence of the Roman legions in the area
- The chaos of a society coming apart at the seams (Josephus)
- Israel’s ruling class served as Roman overlords
- An overwhelming sense of powerlessness on the part of the people
- Parable does two things:
 - ➔serves as a reminder of exploitation and poor treatment of the people
 - ➔shows them how to break free from their oppression

How does this resonate with our world today?



STRATEGY FIVE

SAVE YOUR ANGER FOR THE MISTREATMENT OF OTHERS

Byzantine Mosaic

“JESUS’ RESPONSE SHOWS US that there are things that we should be angry about, there are things we must say and do as a testimony against every action, system, policy, and institution that excludes any of God’s children from the fullest fruits of life for any reason.” Hendricks, Obery, Kindle Locations 2839-2841.

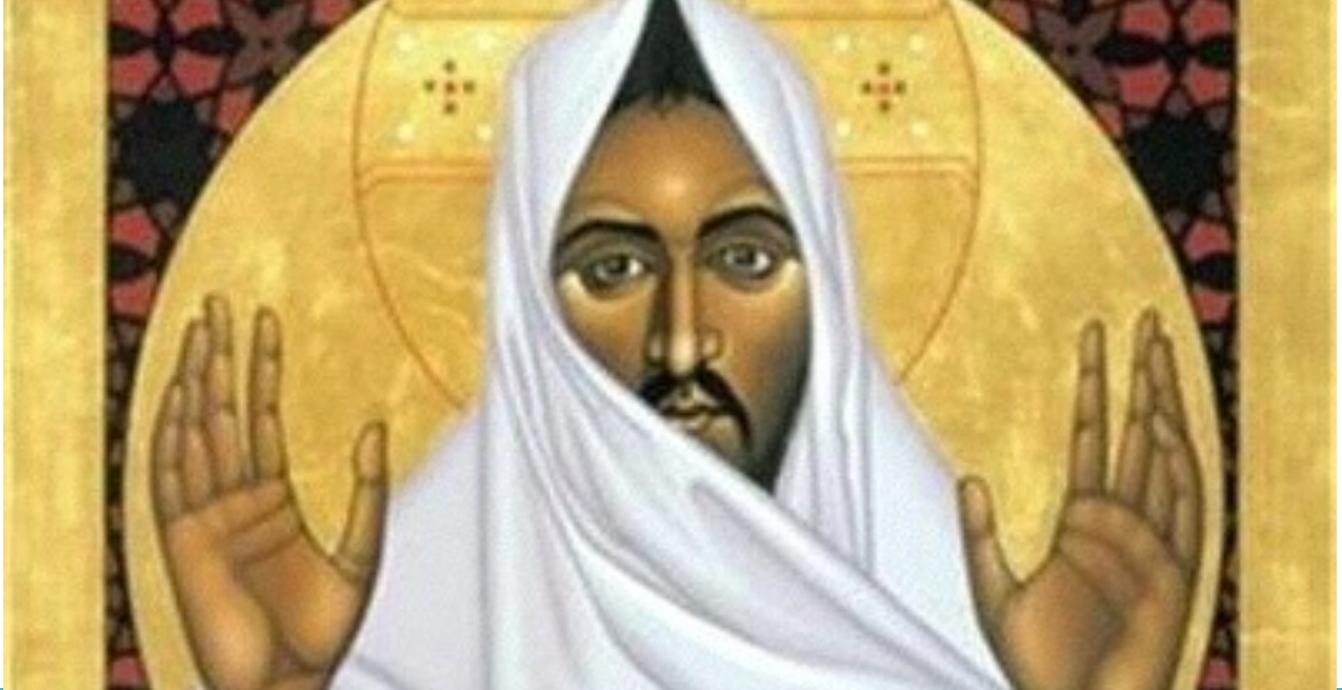
MARK 1:40-45

Things to Notice

- Lepers have a condition that sets them apart and makes it impossible for them to live without begging for every little bit they need to live
- They can be declared clean by the Temple priests which allows them to re-enter society and re-engage their lives.
- “Jesus sent him back” seems to indicate that the priests rejected his case and he is reduced to begging.

The Greek text is not ambiguous. What most translations choose as the word “compassion” is actually a form of the word “anger” How does this change the text?

How does this resonate with our world today?



TAKE BLOWS WITHOUT RETURNING THEM

Christ of the Desert
—Fr. Robert Lentz

“NONVIOLENT OR PASSIVE RESISTANCE has one purpose: to overcome injustice. It exposes the depth of the inequity by showing the lengths of self-sacrifice to which people will go to oppose it. Yet because the opponents of nonviolent resistance are not crushed or humiliated, the strategy offers a basis for reconciliation. Also, the willingness to take blows without giving them demonstrates that one will not be intimidated from the goal of justice or hamstrung by fear.”
Hendricks, Obery, Kindle Locations 3007-3010.

MATTHEW 5:38-41

Subversive Motifs

- “Turn the other cheek” Offering the other cheek rather than cowering and waiting for the next blow is a statement of equality and self-worth.
- “Give him your cloak as well” is a way of making a public protest to a greedy lender. “You might as well take my underwear (cloak), too. You have no power over me because I’ve just given you more than you asked.”

- “Go the second mile” takes power away from the one who demanded the sacrifice in the first place. The burden is carried on the initiative of the one bearing the load.

How does this resonate with our world today?



STRATEGY SEVEN

DON'T JUST EXPLAIN THE ALTERNATIVE, SHOW IT

The Last Supper
by Eularia Clarke

“FOR JESUS, this is what it meant to love your neighbor as yourself: to give what the neighbor needs in the same way and for the same reason that God gives—simply because the neighbor needs it... it was what the people experienced of Jesus that moved them to accept his leadership and risk their lives by following him.” Hendricks, Obery, *Kindle Locations 3121-3148*)

JOHN 6:1-15

Hidden Political Statements

- People are supposed to GO to Jerusalem for Passover but they choose to STAY in Galilee to hear Jesus.
 - People are supposed to GIVE a Passover offering to the temple, but instead they RECEIVE an offering from Jesus.
 - People are supposed to FEAR God's displeasure, but instead they ENJOY God's generosity.
 - ➔ Example of the Divine Economy: those who have food share with those who don't
- ➔ After their needs are met, they collect the leftovers which can be shared with others.
 - The gathering itself was a large assembly, forbidden by Rome and punishable by death on a cross. (Not to mention that 5000 men is the size of a battalion)

How does this resonate with our world today?