

June 14, 2020 (Focus: Luke 10:25-37) "Why is it OK?"

[note: the following is part notes, part prose...hopefully it will be a blessing to you]

Today's parable: full of discomfort for the reader...hero is a samaritan (different, other, hated, despised) Today's equivalent: if conservative then hero is a young black man wearing hoodie walking through your neighborhood, or angry articulate black woman with an afro demanding her place at the table; if liberal, then hero is a republican, or an evangelical preacher...we all have our demons, don't we?

More discomfort in this parable than just who the hero is...also who the villains are...the readily identified villains of the parable are the priest and the Levite (also a sort of religious figure)...they see the injured man, but don't stop to help. No explanation given, but likely folks would have a ready explanation for them...they cannot risk defiling themselves, making themselves unclean before the sabbath...remember to keep holy the sabbath day...their work lies elsewhere...

So easy to think of ourselves as the good Samaritan...we give to the church, we bring in food for the pantry and toiletries for PEP, we give to charities and run in benefit races and call on neighbors...and yes, we are sometimes the good Samaritan. We would never look away, walk away from someone hurt, someone in need, right?

But yet we know, especially now as angry protestors have made it clear to us, that we do look and see but walk on by, we as a society have done it for years, in case of some as long as 400 years have we looked away from the oppression of a people because of the color of their skin and we have let it continue...why is it ok? Why is it ok that POC are still more likely stopped by cops, more likely to have violence used against them, more likely than whites to be killed by cops, more likely sent to prison for longer sentences for the same crime as whites...why is it ok that people are left in crowded/overcrowded jails or prisons for relatively minor crimes with pandemic going on...why is it ok that food deserts, lack of access to health care, and microaggressions starting as children causing daily stress which leads to poorer health...

Why is it ok that 1 in 6 children in the US (over 11 million) live in poverty...why is it ok that the only reason we haven't heard about a school shooting recently is because the school buildings have been closed by a pandemic...why is it ok for workers at hospitals and nursing homes have inadequate protection in pandemic...why is it ok for us to put elderly and sick at risk, have 1K die every day, so can have our haircuts and parties and go to the beach and not wear a face mask...

Why is it ok for president to roll back protections for transgender people that they were given under ACA, putting their health at risk, for him to do so during Pride Month, do so on the fourth anniversary of a massacre at Pulse, the gay nightclub in FL...why is it ok that environmental protections for air, water, natural resources are rolled by without a whimper from congress or more outcry from people?...

Why is it ok that women earn 76 cents for every dollar of white men, latinos even less, and black women even less...why is it ok for families to be separated at the border, for children to be imprisoned in detention centers, for people whose lives are at risk and with a legal right to apply for asylum but denied even a chance to apply...why is it ok for refugees to spend lifetimes in camps, to die on the sea, to face discrimination once arrive...

Why is it ok that people's right to vote interfered with, or have to put their lives at risk just to vote...why is it ok for us to value life so little, if it is not the right sort of life...why is it ok not to see the other as neighbor?

It is Interesting that in this parable the villains not mentioned and rarely talked about are the bandits that attacked the man on the road to Jericho...systems are in place that put people in danger, but not identified, not dealt with

The priest and the Levite never said "I'm letting that man die...", they never explicitly made that calculation, that choice, but that is logical end to their inaction. We would never say "I want racism to happen," "I want poverty to happen," "I want that child to grow up hearing each day how they are different because of the color of their skin, they are wrong because of the color of their skin, they are wrong because of who they love, they are wrong because the gender they see themselves as does not match the parts they have." We would

never say such things, but do our inactions to change oppressive systems that have endured for too long convict us?

Jesus offers this parable, not as comfort, but as challenge – he challenges us not to see ourselves so easily as the hero, but to see the many many ways in which we still walk by those in need, and find excuses not to help...there are people crying out for change, and change scares us, and when we are scared, we don't see very clearly, and it is so easy to be convinced that the man lying by the side of the road asked for it...why was he on the road, what did he do to get himself in trouble...all the while we the priest and Levite walk on by...what can we do...we have no power, we are just one person, we have our own concerns to look after, it is not our neighbor, after all...or is it...why is it ok to so narrowly define neighbor...we haven't truly tried yet to dismantle racism and other oppressive systems, for if we truly tried, we could have stopped it, for together we can be a powerful force for change, a powerful force against evil. We can help to right the injustices of our ancestors. Jesus overcame the cross, and said go and do likewise.

Why is it ok to so narrowly define neighbor... Jesus tells us otherwise.

A PRAYER FOR A VIOLENT NATION

BY **KAITLIN CURTICE**

(Christian also member of the Potawatomi tribe, author of ...Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God)

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*O God,
Mystery,
Creator,
First Breath—*

We are so troubled.
We are the ones in denial of our violence
and we are the ones who are crying out for justice.
Can you feel us shaking?

*O God,
Mystery,
Creator,
First Breath—*

We are spiraling in despair.
We are looking to the ancestors
who teach us how to pray
and we are calling out the ancestors
who handed down their violence to us.
Can we be different?

*O God,
Mystery,
Creator,
First Breath—*

We cannot fathom wholeness
because, maybe, we don't really want it.
Teach us to want it.
Can we want it?

*O God,
Mystery,*

*Creator,
First Breath—*

We cannot go on this way,
with broken bones and unhealed wounds
and people screaming in the streets
for air.

*O God,
Mystery,
Creator,
First Breath—*

We are trying not to give up on each other.
We need to remember our way home.
We need to learn to believe in Us.
Can we believe in Us?

*Help us remember what it means.
Help us name and honor those who are killed in our streets.
Help us name our white supremacy (and repent of our complicity in its evil).
Help us hold one another in Real Love.
Help us deny systems of whiteness.
Help us de-center hate.
Help us find the wounds.
Help us heal the wounds.
Help us.
Help.*