

June 13, 2021 (Focus: Mark 4:26–34)

As I was thinking about this week's scripture reading, I found myself thinking about politicians and feeling sorry for them. Why feel sorry: they have position, power, are paid comfortable, have good free health care, lot of their expenses like travel are covered,... They have people lining up to see them, take pictures with them, ask favors of them, etc.

But I was feeling sorry for them. Well, that is, I was feeling sorry for the politicians who profess to be Christian. I was feeling sorry for them for what they have to endure on a Sunday morning. If they don't go to church, if they don't attend a service or a mass, then they might have to answer for that in a way most of us will never have to. What will their staunchly Christian voters say if they just hung out at home, or if they played golf on Sunday morning, that is what would they say if that person weren't a president who in some eyes did no wrong nor could do no wrong.

And if these politicians do go to church on Sunday, it must be a terrible ordeal. They have to listen to all the Jesus talk about loving neighbor and the parables about the kingdom of God and the Lord's prayer about daily bread and forgiveness and leading not into temptation and all the time thinking that this all is well and good for one's personal life, maybe, but it certainly has nothing to do with their work; but why does the preacher always seem to look directly at them when talking about the loving neighbor or welcoming the alien or feeding the hungry or blessed are the peacemaker. Doesn't the preacher know what pressure they are under, from the lobbyists and the folks back home watching their every move and the forces within parties trying to keep certain members in line, etc.

No, I feel sorry for Christian politicians sitting in church today hearing about the kingdom of God, that is if they are even paying attention and not just texting their cronies about when to meet for

cocktails later or what needs of the people to ignore next. If they are listening this morning, they may think that no one, even them, can actually follow in Jesus' way; its not practical. Why, it even sounds a bit, dare we say it, socialist at times. Care for the poor and the least of these? Healing the most desperate and the most disadvantaged and not sending them a bill? The first shall be last and the last shall be first? Without even pulling themselves up by their bootstraps? Sounds socialist, doesn't it?

I feel sorry for most politicians—they don't feel free to live authentically as Jesus followers. They don't feel free to live authentically guided by and as if filled by God's Spirit. What do you mean we are called to scatter seeds of hope and peace and love? What do you mean, we are called to follow in the footsteps of this hippy preacher? Where is the Jesus at the right hand separating the sheep and the goats? Let's stick to that one, that one I can live out, there are lots of sheep and goats that need separating, too much understanding and acceptance of all kinds these days.

I feel sorry for politicians—they don't feel free to listen to God's word and try to live it out in all aspects of their lives, including their work. And in this respect I also feel sorry for corporate leaders and anyone else who thinks that \$7.25 is a living wage. And criminal justice leaders who think racial profiling is legitimate policework and prison populations with disproportionate number of people of color, well, that must be because they are just bad people who commit crimes. And people who support unjust systems like redlining and workplace discrimination.

And people who support unchecked gun rights in light of mass shooting after mass shooting after mass shooting. And people who participate or do nothing to stop gay bashing and violence against transgender women. Is it selective hearing, or some major mental gymnastics they go through to get through a Sunday

service where the love commandment is mentioned, or Jesus talks about how whenever you help the least of these, you are helping him? When Jesus stands on the side of the least of these, where are they standing?

On any given Sunday we are free to listen and learn and we are free to try to live out God's word in all aspects of our lives. There is nothing that would make us separate out how we live in any aspect of our lives from the invitation we receive in Jesus Christ to live into God's kingdom here on earth. This is true for the politicians and corporate leaders and criminal justice officials and others in power as well, if they would just see it that way.

We are free to do so, to live and work and play as it is envisioned in the gospel good news. We are free to do so, which of course begs the question: are we doing so? Are we living and working and playing as it is envisioned in the gospel good news? Are we truly trying in all aspects of our lives to live into the kingdom of God? Or is ours a Sunday morning sort of faith, like others we see in the public arena?

We are free to live and work and play as it is envisioned in the gospel good news. We are free to imagine that the seeds of love and kindness and mercy and peace that we plant may be small, but that the ground of our being that we plant such seeds in, well, it is working on our seemingly small efforts, it is helping to spirit on our efforts, that they will be a major part of the kingdom of God, they are like seeds planted that sprout and grow, we sometimes do not know how but they somehow are enough to support and nurture all God's creation. We are free to do so, to live into God's kingdom here on earth. May we honor and respect that freedom enough to live into it, with each act of loving kindness, with each word of peace, with each offer of mercy and forgiveness, with each bit of good news we share in word and deed, with God's help.

Let us turn our hearts and minds again to God in prayer.

God of all, we give you great thanks for the blessings of this new summer day. As the sun shines on us all, as the morning breeze refreshes us all, may the sun and the breeze remind us that your love and mercy and peace are for us all, each one of us, no matter what is going on in our lives, no matter how we have or have not measured up to ideals or expectations, your love and mercy and peace are for us all. Shine your light upon us that we may see such truth. May your Spirit waft in and around us, that we may share such truth with others, especially those who have been told lies, lies that they are not your beloved, that they are not offered your amazing grace because of who they are or who they love. And we celebrate that your love and grace are all encompassing, all embracing, not things to hoard for ourselves, but things that are multiplied in the sharing far and wide.

There are so many among us, in our community, and in the world in need of your healing compassion and care – grant all in need an experience of your renewing touch, especially...

We offer our love and blessings to all children, their parents, teachers and administrators as the summer break approaches, that this may be a time of rest and renewal, of joy and of stretching beyond the limits of a computer screen to embrace the learning that comes through living out our daily lives. We offer prayers of congratulations and blessings to all graduates and to our graduates especially: Kat Klafka, Evelyn Anton, and Sophia Reiner, as well as their parents. May the journey ahead be one of exploration and new adventures.

Silent prayer/meditation

God of the one and God of all, bless each of us in our own joys, every day living, and in our needs. Guide us that we may always walk with the one we call Christ, our teacher and mentor and brother, who taught us to pray to you saying, Our Father,...

Amen.