

Evolving

Isn't it ironic that when Jesus sees a large crowd following him, his first instinct isn't to pat himself on the back or to post the parade on Facebook.

His first instinct is to remind the crowd to be suspicious of fame, because fame is all about ego, and ego is the number one enemy of becoming our true selves.

Jesus has deep respect for everyone in that crowd, recognizing that their following is not about him, it's about **their** transformation, at least those who are willing to follow this new Way of living.

The measure of his respect for each of them is that he helps them see the cost of following, not just admiring, Jesus.

How Jesus deals with this crowd is deeply ironic because today we live in a world of mega-churches where the emphasis is on how many thousands show up for Sunday worship, complete with lattes and breakfast burritos.

We live in a world where the Word of God is often replaced with the heresy of the prosperity gospel ("I believe God, so make me rich!") or where Scripture simply becomes propaganda in favor of nationalism or fear of those who are different.

It's ironic because we have a leader today who, while visiting those who are injured by, or mourning the dead from, the latest mass shooting, brags about the size of the crowd at his rallies, crowds he loves to incite with chants churning fear and anger.

And so, given the times we are living in, we really do need to lean in and get what it is that Jesus is after today.

He's asking us to take a look at how we see things with our oh so human eyes, things like family and friends and nation, things like patriotism and tribalism, and he's insisting that we compare the way we see things with the way God sees things.

We need to lean in and listen up because every day we see the drumbeats of "us against them," "insiders and outsiders," the "included and the excluded."

All of which is underscored by our national love affair with guns — particularly with assault rifles, whose sole purpose is to quickly kill large numbers of human beings.

It is underscored by our fear of immigrants and those who appear to be different.

It is underscored by those who seek to return to some nonexistent past where everyone was happy, knowing full well that those days never actually existed in real life.

Jesus invites us in this very difficult lesson today to come face-to-face with what a transformed humanity might look like, and how we get there, as he pleads with us to risk the adventure of transformation.

But in order to do so, we need to understand what transformation looks like, and what it doesn't look like.

Transformation isn't a ticket out of this world, it's not a place where our problems and needs disappear.

The transformation that Jesus invites us into makes us totally present to this world, to all of nature, and to one another.

“It’s about becoming so fully present that the line between the sacred and the ordinary is wiped out, so that the face of Christ shines from every face – from every place – from humans to bees to juniper trees.”
M. Starr, *Wild Mercy*, 50, paraphrased.

Which you already know all about, even if you sometimes lack the words to explain it, because that desire to become transformed is the very push or itch or longing or dream that brings each and every one of you here, Sunday after Sunday.

Transformation is rooted in our baptism – when we agreed to die to our way of thinking and our way of doing things, in the hope of rising into God’s way of thinking and doing.

A way that takes us to a place where we stop drawing lines between men and women, gay and straight, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Muslim, and begin to finally accept that we all are one in the infinite womb of the Cosmic Christ, in whom we all of us live and move and have our being.

It is a slow process, which is why, after 2000 years of tinkering around the edges of what Jesus teaches, we are still in Grade School when it comes to living out this faith.

That’s fine.

The change we are called to really does require an evolution, and evolution rarely happens quickly.

Ilia Delio says this about evolution and what it means for us and our maturing Christianity:

“Evolution invites us to expand our consciousness of the divine mystery beyond the limits of human history and to see humanity [and all of creation] within the dance of an evolving, cosmic, history.

We come from Oneness.

We belong to Oneness.

We shall return to Oneness.” Id.

It’s the story of the little boy who asks the new born child, ‘baby, tell me what God is like, I’m beginning to forget...’

Or as Alice Miller puts it:

“Someday we will see our children not as creatures to manipulate or change, but as messengers from a world we once knew, but have long since forgotten, who can reveal to us more about the true secrets of life than our parents ever could.” paraphrased.

As Jesus says, “The one who makes herself as little as this little child is the greatest in God’s kingdom.”

As church, as citizens of the universe, we need this new, innocent, beginners mind.

“And we need a mind open to what science and reason teach us, including the Big Bang and the evolution of species as part of an honest search for truth.

Evolution is part and parcel of the Living God, because physical, spiritual, and psychological change are the fundamental building blocks of reality.

Einstein’s discovery of relativity means that space and time are dimensions of the unfinished, expanding universe; a universe that comes from God and is filled with God.

To see evolution as pointing to the divine means that we come to see that the rhymes and rhythms of nature are in truth, ‘mirrors of the divine.’

This openness moves us from images of God as an old man in the sky, of a flat earth being the center of the universe, to a wider understanding that sees our lives as completely bound up with the life of all creation.

We are not accidents, nor are we mere by-products of an uncaring universe.

We are deeply related to all that is, and it is our destiny to seek the divine Word, expressing herself, in the richness and extravagance and unimaginable beauty of the cosmos.” Dellio, paraphrased.

I know that’s heady stuff for a Sunday morning, and maybe more than a few of you have nodded off or are just scratching sore heads!

But Jesus does that to us.

Over and over he asks us to enter into the larger mind, this metanoia, so that we can at long last step away from the chains of prejudice and pride, ego and self-sufficiency, and truly enter into the freedom that the Cosmic Christ calls us to.

The fruits of that life are all around us.

Last week we remembered the birthday of Queen Liliuokalani.

What we remember is that she began the process of kapu aloha, meeting violence with non-violence, meeting physical force with soul force, a heritage that is even today being lived throughout these islands, perhaps most especially at Mauna Kea.

By declining to engage in violence, which would have led to horrific massacres of the Hawaiian people, she put in place a path by which the Hawaiian people may yet regain their sovereignty.

And she was willing to pay the price, both in the loss of her own freedom and in the condemnation she received from those seeking the quick way out of violence.

Today, the protectors at the Mauna are following in those footsteps.

They are paying the price by enduring the cold and the rain, the insults of those who characterize this struggle as a small band of malcontents, and by extending on a daily basis aloha for, the love of, their adversaries.

This is the way of the cross because "the cross is the symbol of leading a persistent and peaceful life in a violent world." Shea, *The Relentless Widow*, 252.

Every day we are asked, am I, are we, willing to pay the price that comes with following Christ?

Today, what shall our answer be?

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