



Holy Disruptions

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Holy disruptions. Maybe it is just me, but everything feels disrupted these days, holy or not. What we see on the news, what we see in our businesses and churches, the mere fact that we now wear masks as a tool and symbol of safety for each other—the world is not what it was a few short months ago.

I wrote in a newsletter article for Holy Cross about a month back (an eternity ago, in COVID time) that what we are going through now in Christian churches is not without parallel. Later, on a diocesan call with clergy colleagues, one of our more venerable members stated the same thing. We each said that we as the Church are facing something akin to the loss of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. While there are enormous differences between the two times, a few parallels are clear.

First, we have lost our buildings, maybe only for a bit in our case, but the truth of it is still reminiscent. Couple that with the requirement of physical distancing to safeguard everyone and especially the vulnerable, then you have a real sense of separation or loss.

Second, the contemporary Christian world reflects that of Judaism in which Jesus lived much like in the Second Temple period and prior to its loss. We are just as much a beautifully scattered mess of theological disputes, learning, questions, re-imaginings, and re-orientation as folks were then. It was a true evolutionary, often revolutionary, hotbed. Jesus' Jewish world was awash in debate and reformulation. There was a veritable ecology of Jewish religion, with Hellenistic cosmopolitan influences melding new thoughts into Jew and gentile alike.

Third, we see the raw brutality of the state at work in our communities. The destruction of the Second Temple was an intentional choice by Rome to take the most unifying symbol of Jewish culture and religion and to raze it entirely. Only the Wailing Wall is left. Today, we see hundreds of instances on TV, social media, and in news articles, of police brutality towards black people and peaceful protestors. George Floyd and Lafayette Square share similar historical space with the Cross and the Burning of Rome.

Once the temple was lost, many who had focused on tradition as they knew it felt swept away. Everyone was left with a great deal of soul searching to do; deciding what was most valuable about Jewish and early Christian traditions in order to build out of the rubble that Rome left. Judaism and Christianity as we receive them today know this period as their inflection point. The worst had happened, tradition was disrupted permanently. How do we move on?

I will not pretend to have the answers for us, only our common work as Christ's body during this time will reveal our way forward from this moment. What I can say with absolute certainty is that this time of disruption is holy. I am not saying God sent us COVID or that God caused law enforcement to murder George Floyd and countless other black people since the beginning of our nation. What I am saying is that God can bring good out of grief, and action out of anger.

Holy disruptions may feel like earthquakes, but they act like a rototiller. They break up ground that was otherwise compacted. They uproot weeds that would choke out newly planted seeds.

They create room deeper down for roots to fill in. God has always been present in the aftermath. That is as true now as it was in 70 CE. Creativity, as always with our Creator, is the arc that guides our faith.

Disruptions may not be the way we or God choose to change the world, but it is the freshly tilled soil within

which God has always chosen to plant new things, that is what makes disruptions holy. Come what may, may we use this time to plant new things in ourselves and our communities, as our Patient Gardner has forever. Do not let the enormity of the changes to come scare you, because the enormity of the new fruit will far outweigh the momentary losses.

Honestly, it makes me excited, downright hopeful, that we will bear witness to something once unimaginable for us: a step closer to the world Jesus wanted to live in. Just typing it sends chills down my spine. I want to see it, even if I do not know how. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. (Hebrews 11.1-2)” May this wisdom enliven and guide us, always.

