

Propers for Independence Day—July 5, 2020 Sermon—Rev. Lisa

For a solid year I daily played the Hamilton Lottery, trying to win tickets for my daughters, and now we can watch it over and over again in our pajamas! The Broadway musical Hamilton made it into our homes this weekend. The tickets that were once hundreds of dollars now is the affordable price of \$6.99 subscription to Disney Plus. And the best part, you can sit on your own couch and watch the original cast dance and sing in your living room.

I love musicals, I know some people don't, but I do because down deep I truly believe if we had to face our enemies with dancing and singing we would be much better for it.

Lin-Manuel Miranda tells the story of many enemies both past and present in the musical Hamilton. And through dance and song, he celebrates the origin of our nation and raises awareness of racism in America.

Jesus preached 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' I would love to see this- maybe the most uncomfortable teaching of Jesus- put to song with some good choreography- it would certainly make it easier to hear!

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

These words were specifically chosen in the BCP for our national celebration of Independence Day as were the readings from Deuteronomy, the Letter to the Hebrews. Sometimes the words of the bible are comforting but these are unsettling- loving our enemies, holding up the plight of the disenfranchised and calling us to long for God's salvation as our true homeland- I prefer sparklers and my mom's chocolate sheet cake

to these scriptures that bring the story of our nation's fight for independence into the sanctuary of God's Redemption of human kind.

It is a challenge enough to be good citizens doing the hard work of democracy opposing tyranny.

Love your enemies No nation is going to claim it as a national slogan. *and pray for those who persecute you* this is really challenging to set next to Independence Day in which we fought and miraculously beat the British superpower and claimed a new life for our citizens.

To be clear, Jesus loved his enemies- not because he did not fight back and was crucified- but in the way he brought society to see its prejudice, to notice the way we blame, scapegoat, stratifying each other, socially stepping on one another without even knowing it, leaving people marginalized, segregated, dismissed and in the end expendable. In this way Jesus taught his disciples to build a new kingdom of God wherever they find themselves. Christianity calls us to draw our enemies close and in so doing stop the madness of scapegoating and blaming

Maybe you are like me, I often think I don't have any enemies- I am everyone's friend- I love people, whoever is in front of me I rarely have conflicts so I must not have enemies.

During the height of protesters and rioters after the murder of George Floyd I invited the youth of our parish to get together with me over Zoom. Naturally we discussed all that is going on. I asked if any messages from protesters stood out to them. And one of our students said, "Using white privilege to end white privilege." Our conversation grew quiet, the energy and content of our conversation changed, everyone's eyes were opened.

That is a tough one to hear, a difficult enemy to recognize, this persecutor is my own skin and culture I did not build nor want- I was born into it. And yet it diminishes me and our society to unconsciously think white is better.

Lin Manuel's Hamilton raises awareness of the fact we know – the history we read is a perspective not the whole story. One lyric repeated is a question, "Who tells your story?" The question disrupts our Independence Day story. Jesus shaped our religious ethics and beliefs with stories from the margins - the Woman at the well, the fishermen, the tax collector, the centurion, the blind man on the road, the rich man, the widow's mite. These stories would be lost and never known if Jesus had not raised them up.

There are more stories surrounding and on the edge of the narratives we love to tell. There are more enemies than one, there are more heroes than those whose names we know and the enemies are ourselves, often without even knowing it.

When Jesus taught *love your enemies bless those who persecute you*- he guides us to take our lives and our power seriously. We have impact. We have a capacity to heal and grow and see the complexity of the enemies to neighborly love. The way we relate to our enemies both internal and external is crucial to our becoming who God has called us to be.

We are people of faith, yes. We are promised people. God is loving enough to guide us to salvation. Follow God's lead, *Love your enemies, bless those who persecute you*- go where it is hard to go, draw your enemies close, become familiar with them and pray for them that redemption by God's loving merciful hand will save us all.

God bless the land we love our nation and God bless you and may we know God's peace.