

Living the Gospel in This Political Moment

In the last few weeks, we have heard words of endings, despair, violence, and fear. The words have come both from elected officials and our own psyches; bad news taking up the space of good news. What do we do with all of this? One of my spiritual rules is, “What you pay attention to grows.” If we only attend to bad news, that will grow in us; if we listen to good news – or the Good News – that will grow. The Gospel tells us something more: all that opposes God’s love will come to an end; the worst thing that can happen is never the last thing. So, I want to suggest a spiritual practice for the next few weeks: revolutionary hope.

The Gospel tells us that we must put our *faith* into *action* for the sake of the neediest. And so that we might understand what this looks like, we have the example of Jesus. To the sinner without hope, Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Amid hate, he says, “Love your enemies.” In a culture that separated clean and unclean, he ate with tax collectors and defended prostitutes. He did all of this to show us what his culture of peace was to be.

What Jesus notices in people’s lives is not how religious, pious, healthy, or successful they appear. What Jesus sees is the way people love and are loved. This is the reality he stresses throughout his ministry: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” This is our job description, and we make Christ known by joining our action and love into a single event: *love-in-action*.

Love-in-action is what matters as we strive to live in God. This begins with our identity as human persons who are designed to turn outward toward others. If our hearts are turned *solely* toward ourselves and the gratification of our needs, then we turn away from the life of God. If our hearts are set on fire with love of God—when we find joy in doing the works of Christ, as we are alert to God’s justice and righteousness—then we are alive in God. We must avoid whatever it is that blocks the fire of God’s love in our hearts; we must strive to have our hearts set on fire for love of God.

The revolutionary thing about the Gospel is that it expects each person to take up the work of God manifest in the life of Christ. Everyone has power and permission to do this; expertise is of relative value. The moment to take up this work is *now*. We can’t wait for the right moment for this in our lives; the moment is always now. It doesn’t matter how prepared we think we are. What matters is that we say *yes*, in loving action for the sake of creation, no matter the cost. When we do this, we declare that Christ is the Lord and no other.

Whenever we call Christ Lord, we renounce our allegiance to every other ruler, whether spiritual or civil. The intention of the Christian Testament is to stake a claim in the absolute sovereignty of God’s messiah in the lives of those who have been brought over from death to life. This is the reality that turns the world upside down. And this truth causes the powers of this world to oppose the revolutionary implications of Christ’s sovereignty.

Some may ask, “why do we need to talk about such drastic change? Isn’t it enough just to get through election day?” The answer from the Gospel is a simple “no.” We need to talk about the revolutionary implications of the Gospel because it will lead us closer to God. This truth holds no matter who wins the election next month: our life in God is given to us so *that we might become as God is*.

In his humanity, Jesus revealed more fully than ever before the nature of God. In Jesus, there is no personal vanity, no desire for aggrandizement at the expense of others, no desire to exploit any other person’s weakness or misfortune. Christ brings to us the good news of God’s desire for each one of us. God desires that each person enters fully into their true humanity, and honors the true humanity of the other, showing the image of God.

We need the revolution that Christ brings into our world now more than ever. In this revolution we will come to know ourselves truly, to understand how to live with one another lovingly, and to know God intimately. This revolution is different from all others. It is not an exercise of power in the usual sense of the word. The revolution of Christ shows us the true nature of power and rule. Put simply, Christ’s almighty power is not that of force, but truth and love put into action. There is hope in this way, hope that endures in the face of fear.

I encourage you to take this moment to pay attention to hope. When it seems that everything is spinning out of control, return to hope. Choose today to put your love into action for the sake of those who live on the margins. Seek God’s face in the faces of those you encounter every day. And know that we strive in the Spirit of Christ, who is all and fills all, binding all things in love.