

Realizing God's Vision



"As a people of faith we must live our lives not always comforted by the holy but haunted by God's call to live a prophetic life."

– Emilie Townes

1st break:

Discuss John Bell's thoughts on song and social justice in the Northern hemisphere.

2nd break:

What are some of the characteristics of justice as "God's own will for us as we live together?"

List the characteristics of "prophetic theology":

In your own words, explain the similarities and differences between "procedural justice" and a "justice of the common good."

3rd break:

How does fixating on the "virtue of individuals" legitimate the social structure?

What are the implications of people of faith being aware of the notion of "systemic justice/structural justice"?

4th break:

How did the writing of the creeds change the fundamental tenets of Christianity?

How does Jesus' call to liberation and justice conflict with the values of the dominant culture in both his day and in ours?

How was Jesus' strategy different from that of the prophets of Hebrew scripture?

Sr. Prejean suggests that the justice Jesus demanded is expressed in a "preferential love for poor people, for prisoners, for battered women, for children who are in poverty." Explain.

As Jason mentions, the last song on U2's *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb* is really a psalm – a sung prayer entitled, "Yahweh." The song closes with the line, "Take this heart and make it break." What does that line mean to you?

General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

Spirit Practice

Read and meditate on Deuteronomy 10:17-19 and Matthew 25:35-40.

The many issues of immigration and border crossings into the United States are complex and extremely divisive. It reflects issues of land, borders, refugees, laws, abundance vs. scarcity beliefs, ownership, desperation, hospitality and search for hope and improved quality of life, not unlike other geography and people around the world.

No matter your political view, the harsh and tragic reality of the deaths border crossers grows in the desert. Groups such as No More Deaths (www.nomoredeaths.org) are diligently working to provide water stations and transportation to medical attention.

If you haven't already been to their website, read about their work on www.nomoredeaths.org. Consider becoming involved in No More Deaths as part of your spiritual practices.

Artist Valarie James, working with friends and colleagues, created a trio of women made from desert plants and from the clothing, bags and cloth items left by those making the hazardous journey through the desert in hopes of a better life. The women, known as *Las Madres* (The Mothers) stand vigil in the desert grass and represent over 3,000 deaths of women, children and men who have tried to cross the desert in the last decade. These three life-size figures can be seen at Pima Community College East in Tucson, Arizona. Pictures and background information can be viewed at www.lasmadresproject.org.

Re-read the Deuteronomy and Matthew passages. Spend time in prayer for those who live in desperate situations and for those who would risk their lives for a better way of life for themselves and their families.

Words of Wisdom

Jesus calls would-be followers to "Repent, and believe in the good news!" This repentance leaves behind destructive, violent, unjust beliefs and practices in favor of becoming collaborators with God in seeking justice.

Read Mark 1:15

The author of James asks, "What does it profit someone if they say they have faith but have not works? Can their faith save them? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace and be warmed and filled . . ." [That is, you just offer them some pious platitude.] Without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."

Read James 2.14-26

Psalm 51 declares “a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.” When nursing a bruise or a hurt, all it takes is for someone to brush up against it and you twinge from the sharp pain. Such sensitivity is a prime characteristic of a person of faith. Hearts are softened by tears shed in the face of injustice. Hearts are broken from confronting an “abysmal indifference” to suffering and evil. What breaks your heart? What brings tears to your eyes? Poverty? Abuse? Disease? Inadequate housing? Capital punishment? War? Illiteracy? Greed? Perhaps God is inviting you to do something about it. “Repent, and believe in the good news.”

Read Psalm 51

Try it

A song over food with John Bell:

Every nation has a different gift with different insights to offer. Worship songs of the Southern Hemisphere tend to be much more upfront about social justice than those from the Northern Hemisphere.

*“God bless to us our bread,
and give food to all those who are hungry,
And hunger for justice to those who are fed.
God bless to us our bread.” **

This grace from Argentina and other Southern Hemisphere songs are available on CD and in book form in the collection, *“Love and Anger: Songs of lively faith and social justice sung by the Wild Goose Worship Group”* by John L Bell and Graham Maule. Available from: www.ionabooks.com/bookshop. The Songbook is ISBN#: 094798898X

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