

# Politics



***“God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them.”***

— U2's Bono, *National Prayer Breakfast*, 2006

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## **1<sup>st</sup> break:**

In claiming the mantle of the prophets, Jesus claims a variety of ministries and actions. List and discuss some of these prophetic characteristics.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> break:**

How do anger and righteous indignation play into the expression of a prophetic voice?

## **3<sup>rd</sup> break:**

How do the admonitions of the Sermon on the Plain characterize the prophetic life?

According to Flunder, it is essential for the “personal piety piece” and “justice work” to be brought together. Explain.

Describe the observations and practices of Mahatma Gandhi that have been influential to Mel White.

**4<sup>th</sup> break:**

How does Ehrlander's cartoon sync with your experience?

How do politics play into discipleship?

**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?

## Words of Wisdom

*"[Jesus] opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"*

– Jesus quoting Isaiah in Luke 4:17b – 21

*Jesus said: "A prophet is not acceptable in his own country, neither does a physician work cures upon those that know him."*

– Gospel of Thomas 31

Micah 6:8 puts it succinctly: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Jesus followed in this prophetic tradition and put the obligation to fulfill this call squarely on the shoulders of those who call themselves disciples.

***Read Matthew 25:40***

## Spirit Practice

Sometimes we consider the Creator on the Sabbath only and do not allow spiritual teachings and relationships to impact the whole of our lives. Prophets call people to live with integrity, integrating their faith beliefs with their practices each day. If a prophet such as Jesus were to look at your bank account, what story would he or she tell in response? What would your life's mirror reflect? In what way might you be called back toward God?

Ask the same three questions of the following:

Television/movies (content and time spent)?

Books/Magazines (content)?

Time/money spent on leisure?

Care of/advocacy for the environment?

## Try it

*"We must also preach the whole Gospel which not only calls people to love Jesus but to bring his justice into the political and economic arena in which we live."*

– Tony Campolo

This prophetic Jesus not only challenges our person-to-person relationships but our social and political involvement as well. This is where things become more complicated and more emotional for some people. What may need to be done may be more controversial. Catholic Bishop Dom Helder Camara of Brazil experienced this phenomenon firsthand when he began to speak out for social reforms in his country. He said, "When I gave food to the poor, they called me a saint. When I began to ask why there were so many poor, they called me a communist."

Southern Baptist pastor and scholar, Clarence Jordan, lived in Georgia and started an interracial farming community called the Koinonia Farm. It was here that Millard Fuller came for a retreat and formed the idea for Habitat for Humanity. Before Dr. Jordan's community gave birth to Habitat, he was a pioneer in the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. He would often preach as a guest in little Baptist churches and would usually not get invited back because of his message of equality for all people of all colors. On one occasion he had given a sermon that called for our country to stop the practice of segregation. After the sermon, a lady came up to him and said, "My granddaddy was an officer in the Confederate army and he would not believe a word that you just said about race relations." Clarence Jordan smiled sweetly and said, "Well, ma'am, your choice is very clear then. You can follow your granddaddy or you can follow Jesus."

Where are you sensing a call to bring "justice into the political and economic arena in which we live"? Covenant with someone in your group to take one practical step towards that goal.