Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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July 12, 2020

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“Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth” (Matt 10:34).

Isa 1:10-17; Matt 10:34—11:1

It has been said that the only permanent thing is change. The movement of time reveals constant flux, with periods of stability forming the next wave of change. One image of history is a pendulum moving one way until its own counterweight pulls it back in the opposite direction. When change does come, it is often most visible as intergenerational. One generation holds on to its own structures and sets of values while their children seek to adapt things to their needs and vision of life.

Jesus knew that his message of justice and love would be disruptive to people whose privilege was maintained on the backs of others. His vision of a more egalitarian society threatened those who used force to control society and extracted wealth from the land by the labor of others, including slaves and resident aliens. Beneath Jesus’ message of love and right relationships was an implied revolution of the heart requiring social transformation to create actual community.

So, Jesus’ words in today’s Gospel about conflict between generations and within families are no surprise. The historical context heightened the urgency of the Jesus’ teaching. The early church witnessed epochal religious upheaval when Jerusalem fell during the Jewish-Roman War and a great diaspora flowed from the Middle East into the Mediterranean basin. Roman persecution of Christians further split families as some tried to accommodate Rome while others went underground.

While most of us have lived relatively undisturbed, we might wonder what stories will be told some day by millions of refugees and immigrants who are now struggling to rebuild their lives after fleeing wars, weather disasters and economic dislocation. And who can say for sure that profound instability and uncertainty does not await everyone in a world riding fresh waves of change caused by rising consciousness, institutional failure and ecological shifts?

Jesus' words should disturb us. The underlying question is, if all else fails, what can we depend on? If family loyalties fail or cannot provide support, if national security does not afford us special treatment, if institutional religion does not lead us, what will we do in crisis? Jesus offers us himself as a compass by making our relationship with him central. If we take up our cross and follow him, we will not lose our way. Even if we lose our life for his sake, we will find it. Jesus is the continuity in change, the stability in transition.

He concluded his instruction to his disciples with the assurance that whoever receives them will be receiving him and the One who sent him Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple will be remembered and rewarded. Within these promises is a whole world of guarantee that if we keep faith, we will find life. If we make love our rule, we will be part of a blessed network of caring and giving that will meet our basic needs as part of history's great pilgrimage to the Beloved Community.
 Trusting that this is real and true is what faith is all about.

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