

March 31, 2019

Matthew 20:1-16

Difficult Bible passage – youth, interpreters
struggled with it

It is just not fair!

Lots of passages – stories, parables – I could have
used

- who is in and who is out
- who is righteous and who is not
- who is welcome and who is not

But, the generous landowner has visceral connect
still today and potentially the most “political”
implications

Social Prophet used by me would send others to
assume I was going political

That is because until recently Social Prophet meant
radical political action, as well as righteous
indignation

It no longer does, automatically

What has changed?

The last two years spent “Building Bridges”

And now, Marcus Borg’s book

I have been working on calming my quick “righteous
rage certainty”, looking for what outrages the
other side

What is most helpful is Borg’s emphasis on
compassion – *passion* “to feel”, *com* “with”

Different than empathy – to feel for

Whatever your view on immigration

Compassion – to feel with

parents who are separated from their children at the
border – feel with? OMG

children separated from parents – feel with? fearful,
OMG

Whatever your view around LGBTQ/gender issues

Compassion – to feel with

- a 15-year-old put out on the street by parents
because of their gender identity or sexual
preference – OMG
- a gay man tied up to a car, dragged down the road,
then tied to a barbed wire fence, and left to die

Whatever your view on race

Compassion – to feel with

- African-American parents allowing their 17-year-
old son to use the family car to go to the movies
with friends, fearful of not only unsavory
individuals in society, but also the police

Anti-Semitism – Jews and Arabs are Semites

Compassion – to feel with

- knowing they feel they are walking and worshipping targets for the next hate crime and/or shooter, if we are “to feel with”, to be compassionate, it is time for us, the ones who are not necessarily targets, to name those who espouse this hate, especially white supremacist, as members of a terrorist organization, for they are striking terror into the hearts of many, many people

I have listed my “liberal” causes, Jesus works both sides of the street

When I am upset with the Tiverton budget process, when I disagree with some members of the committee

Compassion – to feel with

- Calls me to remember all those struggling to pay bills, to remain in their house of 50 years, but unable to, because they cannot afford the tax bill

Jesus, in his day, was a social prophet calling the religious, political leaders to task, but not because he had a liberal agenda, rather because he had a compassionate heart for any who were suffering

- Some suffering was financial – the generous landowner. Here Jesus feels with, has compassion for those who waited and worried all day long

how on earth they were going to be able to feel and house their families. In this story, Jesus is telling us God has provided creation with enough, if we will only be as generous as this landowner.

- some suffering caused by ritual purity laws – separating who was in and who was out, which could and did cause financial hardship – illness, wealth separated
- some suffered along racial lines

All of them were met by Jesus with compassion; all were welcomed and transformed by their encounter.

As followers of Jesus, a social prophet, we too are called to meet the world with compassion, to feel with

The amazing truth is, when we are willing to make our hearts vulnerable, allow ourselves to feel with the suffering of others, they will be transformed, and so will we.

Amen.