



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

September 11, 2016

Discussion Guide

Creating A New World

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

ARE YOU A PERSON WHO LIVES IN TENSION EASILY? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE BACKGROUND OF THE YEAR OF JUBILEE AND HOW IT PROVIDES A BACKDROP FOR JESUS' MINISTRY AGENDA.
- READ LUKE 4.14-21 ALOUD SEEKING TO IMAGINE YOURSELF PRESENT IN THE SYNAGOGUE, LISTENING TO JESUS. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, ALLOWING JESUS' WORDS TO SINK IN DEEPLY.
- ACCORDING TO JESUS, WHAT WAS HIS MINISTRY AGENDA? WHAT WERE THE ASPECTS OF THIS AGENDA? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- WHICH OF THESE ASPECTS MIGHT HAVE CREATED A SENSE OF "OH, YEAH!" AMONG JESUS' AUDIENCE? WHICH MIGHT HAVE CREATED A SENSE OF "OH, NO!?" COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- JESUS' MINISTRY AGENDA WAS TO CREATE A PRESENT AND FUNCTIONING COMMUNITY IN WHICH PEOPLE EXPERIENCED THE REALITIES OF JUBILEE. WHAT MIGHT SUCH A COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE TODAY?
- WHAT WOULD BE THE "OH, YEAH!" AND "OH, NO!" MOMENTS FOR SUCH A COMMUNITY?
- IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THE PURSUIT OF SUCH A COMMUNITY PUT THE CHURCH AT ODDS (IN TENSION) WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS (POLITICAL OR OTHERWISE)?
- BOTH PAUL AND PETER ENCOURAGE THE CHURCH TO LIVE IN THESE TENSIONS BY BEING AT PEACE WITH EXISTING SYSTEMS ALL THE WHILE MAINTAINING AN UNSWERVING COMMITMENT TO LIVING OUT KINGDOM REALITIES (ROMANS 12.9-13.8;

1 PETER 2.11-17). WHAT, IF ANYTHING, MAKES THIS DIFFICULT? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

- WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO CREATE AND THEN MAINTAIN THE COMMUNITY JESUS INVITES US TO ENTER? WHAT, IF ANYTHING, KEEPS US FROM TAKING STEPS TO ANSWER JESUS' INVITATION?
- CONCLUDE WITH PRAYER, ASKING FOR COURAGE AND INSIGHT IN HOW TO TAKE STEPS TOWARD CREATING A COMMUNITY WHICH LIVES OUT THE REALITIES OF JUBILEE.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

JUBILEE

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE WAS INTENDED TO BE A CYCLICAL RELEASE OF LAND AND DEBT SLAVES AMONG THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. GOD COMMANDED THE ISRAELITES TO LIVE IN A RHYTHM OF WORK AND REST (EXODUS 20.8-11), AND HE EXTENDED THIS SAME RHYTHM TO THE LAND OF CANAAN. THE ISRAELITES WERE TO WORK THE LAND SIX YEARS, BUT THE LAND WAS TO LIE FALLOW DURING THE SEVENTH YEAR (LEVITICUS 25.1-7). AFTER SEVEN SUCH CYCLES (FORTY-NINE YEARS), THE NEXT YEAR WAS TO BE DECLARED TO BE A YEAR OF JUBILEE (LEVITICUS 25.8-11). THE JUBILEE YEAR WAS TO BEGIN ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT THEREBY ASSOCIATING THIS YEAR WITH AN OUTWORKING OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT AMONG HIS PEOPLE. THIS ASPECT OF REDEMPTION IS IMPORTANT TO GRASP IF ONE IS TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE JUBILEE YEAR. APART FROM REDEMPTION, JUBILEE SIMPLY BECOMES A YEAR TO RESET SOCIETY. WHILE THE THEME OF STARTING OVER IS INCLUDED IN JUBILEE, THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS LIES IN THE RELEASE FROM BONDAGE.

HAVING LIVED IN EGYPT AS SLAVES, THE HEBREW PEOPLE WERE FAMILIAR WITH BONDAGE. HOWEVER, GOD HAD DELIVERED THEM FROM EGYPT AND INTENDED THAT THEY LIVE AS SLAVES NO MORE, BUT AS HIS PEOPLE IN THE LAND HE HAD GIVEN THEM (LEVITICUS 25.55). HOWEVER, THE HARSH REALITIES OF LIFE WORKED AGAINST THE FREEDOM OF GOD'S PEOPLE. BONDAGE CREEPT BACK INTO EVERYDAY LIFE AS ISRAELITES FELL INTO POVERTY AND WERE FORCED TO SELL THEIR LAND (LEVITICUS 25.25) OR EVEN THEMSELVES (LEVITICUS 25.35). BECAUSE THE EXPERIENCE OF BONDAGE WAS NOT WHAT GOD INTENDED FOR HIS PEOPLE, HE PROVIDED A MEANS OF RELIVING THE EXODUS IN A CYCLICAL MANNER, JUBILEE.

DURING THE YEAR OF JUBILEE, THE LAND WAS TO BE RETURNED TO THOSE WHO HAD SOLD IT (LEVITICUS 25.13-34) AND THOSE WHO HAD FALLEN INTO BONDAGE WERE TO BE FREED AND RETURNED TO THEIR CLAN (LEVITICUS 25.35-55). NO PERSON OR PIECE OF PROPERTY WAS TO BE EXEMPT FROM JUBILEE. IN THE HONORING OF JUBILEE, THE ISRAELITES REENACTED THE EXODUS EXPERIENCE AS GOD'S ENSLAVED PEOPLE WERE FREED, FOOD WAS SUPPLIED FOR HIS PEOPLE TO EAT (LEVITICUS 25.11), AND A LAND OF INHERITANCE

WAS GIVEN TO THEM. IN SHORT, THE YEAR OF JUBILEE WITH ITS CYCLE OF FIFTY YEARS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EACH GENERATION TO RELIVE THE REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT OF GOD EXPERIENCED IN THE EXODUS, BRINGING FROM BONDAGE TO THE POINT OF ENTERING THE LAND TO RECEIVE THEIR PORTION. THUS, JUBILEE "RESET THE CLOCK," ALLOWING EACH GENERATION TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE FREEDOM. TRAGICALLY, NO EVIDENCE EXISTS THAT THE ISRAELITES EVER PRACTICED JUBILEE. RATHER, HIERARCHIES DEVELOPED AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE. LAND WAS LOST. AND, SLAVES REMAINED IN BONDAGE. IT IS THEREFORE QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE THE DEEP EXCITEMENT EXPERIENCED BY THOSE IN JESUS' AUDIENCE WHEN HE PROCLAIMED THE YEAR OF JUBILEE IN HIS NAZARETH SERMON (LUKE 4.19). WITH THIS DECLARATION, JESUS WAS PROCLAIMING A MOVEMENT OF GOD WHICH WOULD ALLOW HIS AUDIENCE TO EXPERIENCE HIS REDEMPTION, A REDEMPTION THAT WOULD ALLOW GOD'S PEOPLE TO BEGIN AGAIN, LIVING IN LIGHT OF GOD'S FREEDOM.

THE TEXT

LUKE 4.14-21: STARTING OVER

THE SETTING OF JESUS' NAZARETH SERMON IS HIS TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS (LUKE 4.1-13). OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS, JESUS OPENED HIMSELF TO THE FORMING HAND OF HIS FATHER, BUT, IN SO DOING, EXPERIENCED THE TEMPTING OF SATAN. SATAN'S TEMPTED JESUS TO CARRY OUT HIS KINGDOM MISSION ON CULTURE'S TERMS, BUT JESUS REFUSED. HE WOULD ENGAGE IN HIS KINGDOM MINISTRY ON HIS FATHER'S TERMS. IT IS THEREFORE NO COINCIDENCE THAT JESUS EMERGES FROM HIS TIME IN THE WILDERNESS HAVING THE GREAT POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. LUKE REMINDS US HERE OF WHAT PAUL STATES CLEARLY IN 2 CORINTHIANS 10.3-4. GREAT POWER LIES IN THE KINGDOM WAYS OF THE FATHER. THE EFFECT OF THIS POWER IS SEEN IN HOW PEOPLE RESPONDED TO JESUS. THE ENTIRE REGION OF GALILEE WAS ABUZZ ABOUT THIS FORMER CARPENTER, PRAISING HIM. SIMPLE CARPENTERS DO NOT MAKE THIS KIND OF NATIONAL SPLASH APART FROM THE POWER OF GOD.

THE ONE QUESTION THAT ARISES AT THIS POINT IN THE NARRATIVE CONCERNS THE NATURE OF JESUS' KINGDOM MINISTRY. CERTAINLY, JESUS HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF TO ENGAGING IN HIS MINISTRY ON HIS FATHER'S TERMS, BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS THE NATURE OF THIS MINISTRY? WHAT IS JESUS SEEKING TO ACCOMPLISH AS HE SPEAKS TO PEOPLE IN THE GALILEAN SYNAGOGUES? LUKE PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO THE NATURE OF JESUS' MISSION BY PORTRAYING A SERMON SPOKEN BY JESUS IN HIS HOMETOWN SYNAGOGUE.

ON A CERTAIN SABBATH, JESUS HAPPENED TO BE IN HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH AND WENT TO WORSHIP AT THE SYNAGOGUE WHICH WAS HIS NORMAL CUSTOM. (JESUS ENGAGED IN THE PRACTICE OF REGULAR CORPORATE WORSHIP!) IT APPEARS THAT ON THIS DAY HE WAS INVITED TO SPEAK THE MESSAGE WHICH INVOLVED DOING ONE OF SEVERAL READINGS AND PROVIDING COMMENTARY UPON THE TEXT READ.

SEVERAL MEN COULD BE INVOLVED, BUT LUKE HAS NOT PROVIDED A RECORD OF THESE OTHER MEN OR THEIR TEACHINGS ON THIS DAY AS JESUS IS HIS FOCUS. MOST LIKELY, JESUS WAS ASKED TO DO ONE OF THE READINGS BECAUSE OF HIS INCREASING STATUS IN GALILEE, A STATUS WHICH MOST CERTAINLY HAD BEEN HEARD IN THE DUSTY NAZARETH STREETS. JESUS' READING INVOLVED THE PROPHETS. ON THIS DAY, THE SCROLL OF ISAIAH WAS CHOSEN AND GIVEN TO JESUS WHO INTENTIONALLY TURNED TO ISAIAH 61, ONE OF THE MESSIANIC SERVANT SONGS. JESUS' CHOICE OF TEXT IS NO ACCIDENT. WITH HIS CHOICE, JESUS IS PLAINLY ALIGNING HIS TEACHING WITH THE REDEMPTIVE MOVEMENT OF GOD THROUGH HIS MESSIAH.

JESUS READ THE BEGINNING OF THIS SONG AND THEN STOPPED. THIS IS A TYPICAL PRACTICE. IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON TO READ IN SHORT BLOCKS AND THEN PROVIDE COMMENTARY IN SOMETHING OF A RUNNING STYLE. HOWEVER, TO READ THE OPENING LINES OF THIS SONG BRINGS THE ENTIRE SONG TO MIND, A SONG WHICH HIGHLIGHTS A NEW EXODUS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE, A RETURN FROM BONDAGE AND EXILE TO THE LAND OF PROMISE WHICH WAS TO BE REBUILT. SIMPLY PUT, THIS SONG PROMISED THE RELIVING OF GOD'S REDEMPTION IN SUCH A MANNER THAT GOD'S PEOPLE WERE ONCE MORE INVITED TO LIVE IN HIS INTENDED FREEDOM. IN THIS SONG, ISAIAH USES LANGUAGE WHICH REFERS TO THE YEAR OF JUBILEE (ISAIAH 61.2), THE PROCLAMATION THAT GOD WAS SETTING PEOPLE FREE (LEVITICUS 25.8-11). IT APPEARS THAT JESUS ALSO QUOTES FROM ISAIAH 58.6 WITH HIS MENTION OF SETTING THE OPPRESSED FREE, BUT THIS IS LIKELY A BIT OF COMMENTARY WHICH WAS WRITTEN INTO THE TEXT JESUS WAS READING. IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON FOR SCRIBES TO INSERT EXPLANATORY VERSES FROM OTHER PARTS OF A BOOK OR TO MAKE EXPLANATORY COMMENTS AS THEY COPIED A TEXT. WHEN THIS TEXT WAS USED TO MAKE THE NEXT COPY, THE NEW SCRIBE WOULD TAKE THE COMMENT TO BE PART OF THE ORIGINAL BECAUSE HE HAD NOT MADE THE COMMENT. THUS, A BIT OF ISAIAH 58 WORKED ITS WAY INTO ISAIAH 61 IN JESUS' SCROLL, MOST LIKELY BECAUSE IT MIRRORS THE FLOW OF THIS SERVANT SONG. (TODAY, BIBLE SCHOLARS USE A DISCIPLINE CALLED TEXTUAL CRITICISM TO SIFT THROUGH HUNDREDS OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS, MANY WHICH HAVE COMMENTS LIKE THESE WHICH HAVE MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE TEXT. THESE SCHOLARS USE TOOLS OF COMPARISON AND EVALUATION TO WORK BACK TO THE ORIGINAL WORDING OF THE TEXT.)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE HOW THE SONG BEGINS WITH THE MENTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THIS SONG EXPLAINS THE POWER PEOPLE ARE WITNESSING IN JESUS. IT COMES FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT. FURTHER, THIS SONG EXPLAINS THE NATURE OF JESUS' MESSAGE. IT IS A GOOD NEWS MESSAGE ("GOSPEL") ADDRESSED TO THE POOR. TWO THINGS ARE IMPORTANT TO GRASP HERE. FIRST, THE USE OF THE WORD GOSPEL IN JESUS' DAY WAS ASSOCIATED WITH ROYAL PROCLAMATIONS. THUS, JESUS' MESSAGE HAS ROYAL (POLITICAL!) OVERTONES. SECOND, THIS MESSAGE IS ADDRESSED TO THE POOR. THE POOR ARE THOSE WHO FIND THEMSELVES IN A PLACE OF WEAKNESS, A PLACE

WHICH LEADS THEM BACK INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF SLAVERY (LEVITICUS 25.25, 35). TO THOSE WHO HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES ONCE MORE ENSLAVED, JESUS' MESSAGE IS THAT OF FREEDOM. HOWEVER, THE FREEDOM JESUS IS PROCLAIMING GOES BEYOND LAND AND SERVITUDE. THE FREEDOM JESUS IS PROCLAIMING INVOLVES THE SPIRITUAL AS WELL AS THE PHYSICAL REALM. JESUS' MESSAGE IS ABOUT THE ABSOLUTE AND COMPLETE ERADICATION OF BONDAGE. SIMPLY PUT, HE IS PROCLAIMING ONCE AND FOR ALL JUBILEE.

HAVING READ THE TEXT FROM ISAIAH, JESUS NOW TURNS TO PROVIDE COMMENTARY. HIS COMMENTARY IS SHORT AND POWERFUL. THE WORDS SPOKEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE BY ISAIAH ARE NOW FULFILLED IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS. IN THE MINISTRY OF JESUS PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE A NEW EXODUS, A RELEASE FROM ALL FORMS OF BONDAGE SO THEY MIGHT LIVE IN THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE OF INHERITANCE IN GOD'S KINGDOM. WHILE THE SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS OF JESUS' PROCLAMATION HAVE BEEN MUCH EXPLORED, WE CANNOT MISS THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. REMEMBER, A GOSPEL MESSAGE IS A POLITICALLY CHARGED MESSAGE. JESUS IS PROCLAIMING A RELEASE FROM ALL FORMS OF BONDAGE, THE BREAKING DOWN OF EVERYTHING WHICH KEEPS PEOPLE FROM LIVING IN THEIR RIGHTFUL STATE, ENJOYING THEIR RIGHTFUL INHERITANCE. THIS IS A STRONG BLOW AGAINST LAND OWNERS WHO WERE OPPRESSING THE POOR AND AN EVEN STRONGER BLOW AGAINST THE OPPRESSING NATION OF ROME. JESUS CLEARLY STATES THAT IN HIS MINISTRY, SUCH OPPRESSION IS NOW OVER. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE FREE TO LIVE IN GOD'S KINGDOM. THE EARLY CHURCH SOUGHT TO LIVE OUT THE REALITY OF JESUS' WORDS, LITERALLY SEEKING TO FREE PEOPLE FROM THEIR DEBT BONDAGE (ACTS 2.44-45) AND BREAKING DOWN CULTURAL BOUNDARIES WHICH CREATED HIERARCHIES (COLOSSIANS 3.11). HOWEVER, THE ANCIENT CHURCH SOON RAN INTO TROUBLE AS IT STRUGGLED TO NAVIGATE THE REALITY THAT ROME, RICH LANDOWNERS, AND THE LIKE DIDN'T GO AWAY. GOVERNMENTS AND SYSTEMS CONTINUED TO EXIST WHICH CONTINUALLY PUT GOD'S PEOPLE IN STATES OF BONDAGE WHICH IS THE VERY NATURE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT (1 SAMUEL 8.10-18). PAUL AND PETER BOTH SOUGHT TO HELP THE CHURCH NAVIGATE THE REALITY OF JESUS' PROCLAMATION THAT NOW WAS THE TIME OF JUBILEE EVEN AS THEY LIVED IN A WORLD WHICH DID NOT MATCH THIS PROCLAMATION. BOTH PETER AND PAUL CALLED ON THE CHURCH TO LIVE AS AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY WHICH LIVED THE REALITIES OF JUBILEE BUT MAINTAINED A DIALOGUE WITH EXISTING GOVERNMENTS AND SYSTEMS WHICH SOUGHT TO BRING ABOUT BONDAGE. PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE CHURCH IS THAT THEY MAINTAIN A POSITION IN WHICH THEY HONOR EXISTING GOVERNMENTS WHILE HOLDING TENACIOUSLY TO A LIFE BASED UPON THE KINGDOM ETHIC OF LOVE (ROMANS 12.9-13.8). PETER'S EXHORTATION TO THE CHURCH WAS ALSO TO MAINTAIN A POSITION IN WHICH THEY WERE RESPECTFUL TOWARD GOVERNING AUTHORITIES. HOWEVER, HE REMINDED THE CHURCH THAT THEY MUST ALWAYS LIVE AS FREE PEOPLE, THOSE WHO BELONGED SOLELY TO GOD (1 PETER 2.11-17). MODERN READINGS OF THESE TEXTS HAVE EMPHASIZED

THE TEACHINGS OF RESPECT AND HONOR BUT HAVE NEGLECTED THE INCREDIBLE TENSIONS CREATED BY THE EXHORTATIONS TO MAINTAIN AN ETHIC OF LOVE, LIVING FREELY AS GOD'S PEOPLE. IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW LOVE AND HONOR, RESPECT AND FREEDOM COULD CLASH, AND THEY DID WITH EARLY BELIEVERS WILLINGLY LAYING DOWN THEIR LIVES REFUSING TO FOLLOW THE LEADING OF THEIR GOVERNMENTS. PETER AND PAUL REMIND US THAT THE LIVES OF THE INHABITANTS OF GOD'S KINGDOM ARE LIVED IN TENSION. ON THE ONE HAND, THE PEOPLE OF GOD LIVE IN A WORLD NOT FULLY TRANSFORMED, NOT FULLY POSSESSED BY GOD'S KINGDOM. THIS MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED WITH RESPECT AND DEFERENCE TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT CHOSEN TO ANSWER GOD'S KINGDOM INVITATION. HOWEVER, WITHIN THIS LARGER WORLD, THE PEOPLE OF GOD CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY IN WHICH THE REALITIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM ARE FULLY PRACTICED. AT TIMES THIS ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY CAN EXIST PEACEFULLY, AND IN SO DOING EXTEND GOD'S KINGDOM INVITATION TO THE LARGER WORLD. HOWEVER, AT OTHER TIMES THIS ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY FINDS ITSELF AT ODDS WITH THE WORLD IN WHICH IT LIVES. IN THESE SITUATION, IT HOLDS TO A KINGDOM ETHIC, NO MATTER THE COST.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

WHAT WAS JESUS' POLITICAL AGENDA? SIMPLY PUT, JESUS SOUGHT TO CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY, A LITERAL KINGDOM ON EARTH IN WHICH PEOPLE LIVE FREELY IN THE WONDERFUL INHERITANCE GOD HAS INTENDED FOR THEM. THIS SOUNDS WONDERFUL, BUT THE REALITY IS THAT IT CREATES A LOT OF TENSION. THIS ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY MUST LIVE WITHIN THE SHADOW OF A WORLD WHICH HAS NOT ANSWERED GOD'S KINGDOM INVITATION, A WORLD IN WHICH BONDAGE AND HIERARCHIES STAND IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE FREEDOM OF THE KINGDOM. TOO OFTEN THIS TENSION IS TOO DIFFICULT TO BEAR AND I FIND THAT I MOVE TOWARD ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. NO, THAT ACTUALLY ISN'T TRUE. WHEN THE TENSION IS TOO GREAT, I CAPITULATE TO THE WORLD AROUND ME. I SAY, "THAT IS JUST THE WAY IT IS" AND MOVE ON. I THINK MANY OF GOD'S PEOPLE DO THE SAME. WE SIMPLY DON'T ENJOY LIVING IN TENSION, ESPECIALLY NOT THE TENSION CREATED BY JESUS' KINGDOM COEXISTING WITH A NATION LIKE AMERICA. IT IS EASIER JUST TO TAKE THE WAY LIFE IS AROUND US AND BRING IT INTO OUR CONTEXT. BUT, IS THIS THE ONLY SOLUTION? CERTAINLY NOT. WE COULD CHOOSE TO LIVE IN TENSION. WE COULD CHOOSE TO CREATE A COMMUNITY FIRMLY DEVOTED TO LIVING OUT THE REALITIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM, A REALITY OF JUBILEE IN WHICH ALL PEOPLE ARE FREE AND ALL HIERARCHIES ARE DESTROYED SO PEOPLE MIGHT LIVE THE LIFE WHICH WAS INTENDED FOR THEM. AND, AS FAR AS IT DEPENDED ON US WE COULD BE AT PEACE WITH PEOPLE AROUND US, INVITING THEM TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S OFFER OF JUBILEE. BUT THE REALITY IS THAT FREEDOM AND THE LEVELING OF THE PLAYING FIELD SOMETIMES GETS IN THE WAY OF THE WORLD'S AGENDAS. IN THESE CASES, WE COMMIT TO CHOOSING KINGDOM NO MATTER THE COST. I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THIS

KIND OF THINKING LEAVES ME SCRATCHING MY HEAD. WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE? IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH IT LOOKED LIKE BEING FED TO THE LIONS. TODAY? I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN IMAGINE BECAUSE I MUST FIRST TAKE THE STEP OF COMMITTING TO CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY, A LITERAL KINGDOM ON EARTH. I BELIEVE I AM AT A POINT IN MY LIFE WHERE I LONG FOR THIS AND AM WILLING TO PURSUE IT. THE REST. . .IT WILL JUST HAVE TO UNFOLD.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

WHAT WAS JESUS' POLITICAL AGENDA? SIMPLY PUT, JESUS SOUGHT TO CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY, A LITERAL KINGDOM ON EARTH IN WHICH PEOPLE LIVE FREELY IN THE WONDERFUL INHERITANCE GOD HAS INTENDED FOR THEM. THIS SOUNDS WONDERFUL, BUT THE REALITY IS THAT IT CREATES A LOT OF TENSION. THIS ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY MUST LIVE WITHIN THE SHADOW OF A WORLD WHICH HAS NOT ANSWERED GOD'S KINGDOM INVITATION, A WORLD IN WHICH BONDAGE AND HIERARCHIES STAND IN DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE FREEDOM OF THE KINGDOM. TOO OFTEN THIS TENSION IS TOO DIFFICULT TO BEAR AND I FIND THAT I MOVE TOWARD ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. NO, THAT ACTUALLY ISN'T TRUE. WHEN THE TENSION IS TOO GREAT, I CAPITULATE TO THE WORLD AROUND ME. I SAY, "THAT IS JUST THE WAY IT IS" AND MOVE ON. I THINK MANY OF GOD'S PEOPLE DO THE SAME. WE SIMPLY DON'T ENJOY LIVING IN TENSION, ESPECIALLY NOT THE TENSION CREATED BY JESUS' KINGDOM COEXISTING WITH A NATION LIKE AMERICA. IT IS EASIER JUST TO TAKE THE WAY LIFE IS AROUND US AND BRING IT INTO OUR CONTEXT. BUT, IS THIS THE ONLY SOLUTION? CERTAINLY NOT. WE COULD CHOOSE TO LIVE IN TENSION. WE COULD CHOOSE TO CREATE A COMMUNITY FIRMLY DEVOTED TO LIVING OUT THE REALITIES OF GOD'S KINGDOM, A REALITY OF JUBILEE IN WHICH ALL PEOPLE ARE FREE AND ALL HIERARCHIES ARE DESTROYED SO PEOPLE MIGHT LIVE THE LIFE WHICH WAS INTENDED FOR THEM. AND, AS FAR AS IT DEPENDED ON US WE COULD BE AT PEACE WITH PEOPLE AROUND US, INVITING THEM TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S OFFER OF JUBILEE. BUT THE REALITY IS THAT FREEDOM AND THE LEVELING OF THE PLAYING FIELD SOMETIMES GETS IN THE WAY OF THE WORLD'S AGENDAS. IN THESE CASES, WE COMMIT TO CHOOSING KINGDOM NO MATTER THE COST. I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT THIS KIND OF THINKING LEAVES ME SCRATCHING MY HEAD. WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE? IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH IT LOOKED LIKE BEING FED TO THE LIONS. TODAY? I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN IMAGINE BECAUSE I MUST FIRST TAKE THE STEP OF COMMITTING TO CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITY, A LITERAL KINGDOM ON EARTH. I BELIEVE I AM AT A POINT IN MY LIFE WHERE I LONG FOR THIS AND AM WILLING TO PURSUE IT. THE REST. . .IT WILL JUST HAVE TO UNFOLD.



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