

JESUS FROM THE EDGES

Listening to the voices of those on the undersides and margins of society

Luke 6.20-26—Looking at his disciples, he said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

“When the gospel says, ‘The last will be first, and the first will be last,’ despite the fact it is counterintuitive to our cultural presuppositions, it is invariably good news to those who are last, and at least problematic news to those who see themselves as first.”— Peter Gomes, *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What’s So Good about the Good News?*

“Good news to some will almost inevitably be bad news to others. In order that the gospel in the New Testament might be made as palatable as possible to as many people as possible, its rough edges have been shorn off and the radical edge of Jesus’ preaching as been replaced by a respectable middle, of which ‘niceness’ is now God. When Jesus came preaching, it was to proclaim the ends of things as they are and the breaking in of things that are to be: the status quo is not to be criticized; it is to be destroyed.” - Ibid.

Mark 1.16-20—As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Amos 4.2—[You who oppress the poor] The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: “The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.

Ezekiel 29.3-4—“I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams . . . But I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales. I will pull you out from among your streams, with all the fish sticking to your scales.

Isaiah 1:17—“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct **oppression**; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”

Zechariah 7:9-10—“This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not **oppress** the widow or the fatherless, the immigrant or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’”

Proverbs 31:8-9—Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for **the rights of all who are destitute** [without the basic necessities of life]. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Jeremiah 22:3—This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been exploited. Do no wrong or violence to the immigrant, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

Psalms 82:3—“Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the **oppressed** and the destitute.”

Mark 10:21,22—Jesus looked at him and **loved him**. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Paulo Freire—“In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both.” (Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition)

Aboriginal Activists Group, Queensland, 1970’s —“If you have come to help me, please go home. But if you have come because your liberation is somehow bound with mine, then we may work together.”

Luke 7:22—So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: . . . the good news is proclaimed **to the poor.**”

Matthew 11:28-30—“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is **easy** and my burden is light.”

Matthew 19:21-23—Jesus answered, “If you want to be whole, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is **hard** for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Luke 4:18-19—The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim **good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to **set the oppressed free**, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. (cf Isaiah 61)

James H. Cone—“Native American theologian Robert Warrior makes a similar challenge by reading the Exodus and Conquest narratives ‘with Canaanite eyes.’ The Exodus is not a paradigmatic event of liberation for indigenous peoples but rather an event of colonization.” (God of the Oppressed, Introduction)

Luke 6:27-28—“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

James H. Cone—“And Yahweh’s justice is not only for Israel but for all who hurt and inflict hurt in the world. For the oppressed, justice is the rescue from hurt; and for the oppressors it is the removal of the power to hurt others—even against their will—so that justice can be realized for all.” (God of the Oppressed)

