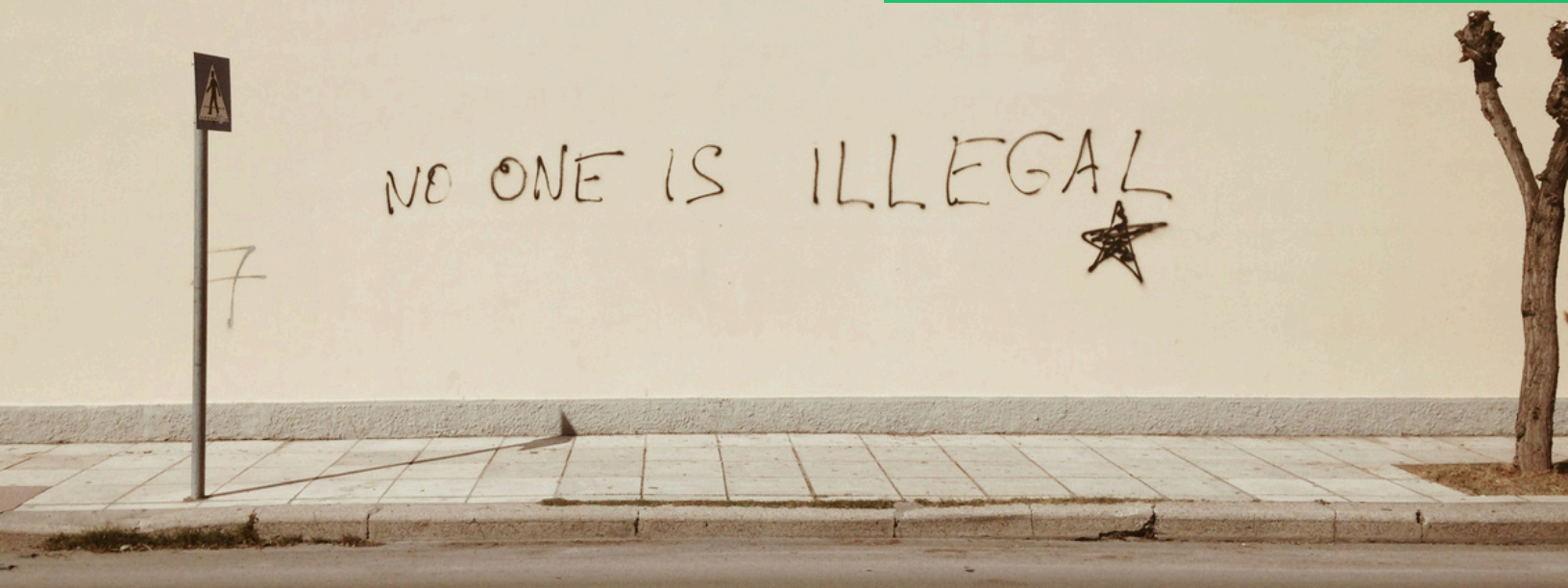


THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 20, 2024



FOLLOW

are we ever really ready?

by Drew Downs

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem with his disciples, there is great anxiety among the crowds following them. This shouldn't surprise us, however, as Jesus has not only predicted a confrontation, but his death.

And if Jesus actually is the Messiah, then this confrontation feels like it is for all of the marbles. Life and death. Our movement against their army. Can we ever really be ready for that?

What we see from Jesus in this sequence is not his own fears—but a generosity for the people. Not just in understanding their fears, but in encouraging us to see the importance of following anyway.

None of them are ready. They have a mission alignment problem. But Jesus trusts them anyway. And they follow anyway. Which shows how much more important following can be than being ready. Or being right.

ORDINARY TIME

2024

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

How would Jesus vote?

Last week, I spoke to the idea of politics and religion—that we have to continuously work through what the relationship between the two is supposed to be. For our second Rector's Forum **this week**, we will explore the idea of what Jesus thinks about politics—and what influence that ought to have on our own.

I don't want to spoil it—I'd rather you join us **Sunday, October 20 at 11:30**, so I won't go deeper into the details of what we're planning. But I do want you to think about what impact your faith has on your political values—because they should.

Separating our values is a mistake—because doing so can dramatically imbalance our behavior. For example, in capital cases, those who believe capital punishment shouldn't be used are automatically struck from the jury, meaning the only people allowed to hear capital cases are people who think it should be used. While this makes for a functional trial, it doesn't reflect a truly neutral jury. And the absence of faith in the ordering of our society doesn't ensure moral values will be encouraged. Utilitarian philosophy, for example, is fond of promoting injustice for the few to maximize the benefit for the masses.

The separation of church and state establishes buffers and principles for how we approach the relationship between the two. And while we may quickly recall examples of abuse, we should refrain from assuming that represents the relationship itself. Abolition, civil and equal rights, and anti-war movements are faith movements. So is economic and carceral justice. We must not pretend faith isn't welcome in our hearts or our voting booths.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2024

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 24B

October 20, 2024

Collect

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

This passage comes immediately after Jesus's third prediction of his coming Passion: and the one most detailed about the events that will occur. They are finally approaching Jerusalem, their destination. The place of the final confrontation with the authorities that have proven themselves principally focused on silencing Jesus's message about grace and God's dream in a new Kin-dom.

What is obviously striking about the passage itself is that James and John brazenly ask for a special place in the new order—at least as far as being his most trusted lieutenants. Their mistake seems to invite another.

Their request is obviously an act of hubris that, given their special place already, seems at least partially justified. The reader is supposed to be frustrated with them—just like the other disciples are. And this, I think, is the other mistake.

James and John have elevated themselves above the rest—asking Jesus to crown them as the greatest among the disciples—which is deeply problematic. But the disciples' response—to condemn them—invites another hierarchical distinction. One that Jesus shuts down. He tells them that these ways of seeing the world is how the powerful in our world lord their power over others.

This is why God has to reset the relationships: because we're constantly feeling justified in making ourselves "great" and putting others below us. We say that we are good and they must be bad.

It isn't hard to see this in our world now. We rank ourselves at school and work, by money and status, through voting behaviors and ideological convictions, through immigration status and place of birth, and the color of our skin and gender identification. What may be harder is acknowledging that loving someone is actually easier than holding a grudge. At least when we have faith on our minds, rather than certainty.

ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
215 N. 7TH ST TERRE HAUTE IN 47807
812.232.5165

STSTEPHENSTH.ORG
