

Ambivalence

It being Holy Week during which Jesus comes to trial before the Temple leadership and the Empire of Rome, it seems to me we should turn back the pages of the Gospels to their very beginning where Jesus begins to say and do things that already earn him a death warrant.

Things he said in his Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, "You shall love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

OR

You have heard it was said: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, "Offer no resistance . . . When someone strikes you on the cheek, turn the other to him as well." [In effect he was saying: be as *wholeheartedly* open as the bountiful Source of this universe that created you.]

For it was even *that early* in his mission, at the very moment when he launched into the rhythm of *You have heard it said . . . but I say to you*, that the powers that rule our world felt threatened. Why? Because they felt a tension, an enticement into possibilities that would radically change the world we live in – a remaking of the human race.

Things he did:

Added to such sayings were the miracle stories that contributed to his future condemnation. For instance, early in the Gospel of Mark (to select one such story) Jesus restores the withered hand of a man in a synagogue – contrary to the law of Sabbath rest. The religious authorities become immediately nervous. Jesus is acting beyond his tradition's boundaries designed to control rather than release humanity, to keep things orthodox, correct, uniform, predictable if possible. Yet such miracles of healing and yes even of walking on water or of feeding five thousand out of almost nothing or raising a young girl from her deathbed challenge us to open up horizons no longer as boundaries, deadends, but as *thresholds* to greater regions of what it means to Be human.

Constantly the reaction of the authorities, the caretakers of established institutions, dogmas, cautions, and permanence - recoil, query, conspire to stop this irrepressible behavior – the abnormality of such events. Rational change (technology) is ok but mainly to extend our control of things rather than truly unveil the mystery that we and our universe are! Which makes life interesting – to say the least! And so on Good Friday we arrive at that point in the mission of Jesus when the major institutions of his world, the Temple and scribes along with a Roman court (anticipating other "institutions" to come) deliberately resist his sayings, parables and unsettling behavior to conclude: He deserves to die!

And not only the authorities come to this verdict but the leader of Jesus's followers joins in the cursing and swearing and declares: *I do not know the man*, leaving it to a cock to crow the dawn of a new day.

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