

WALK IN LOVE

as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

Ephesians 5:2



Reflection by Dr. JohnL Johnson –

Luke 18:1 has been ordained “the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent woman.” Upon reflection, a picture of American social-political individualism comes into focus. The woman, a rugged individualist, pleaded for and received her “justice.” She was persistent and received the charity of the judge only for his own convenience.

But what about the neighborhood and town which was also subject to the judge’s malfeasance? It was not only the woman who was subject to a judge who “didn’t fear God or care about people.” The justice system in the parable was based on favoritism to the persistent, and not to all to whom justice is a right.

In today’s America those individuals who can afford high-powered legal representation to navigate the judicial process receive one kind of justice while the poor, the disenfranchised, the oppressed remain subject to systems of justice that injure the spirit and diminish their humanity. We have become aware that the justice system in many communities seems to be infected by racial inequality that has an undeniable connection to slavery. The woman in the parable received dysfunctional justice leaving her unable to explain this “justice” to her neighbors, male and female. It was charity given by the unjust judge which left the community in bondage to his lack of integrity.

What does this mean for Christians? “We must move beyond charity toward Justice,” The American Friends Service Committee tells us. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker in his 1853 sermon “Justice and Conscience” preached that “The Arc of the Moral Universe Bends

Toward Justice.” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached a reconciling statement derived from Parker’s sermon: “The arc of the universe is long but it bends toward Justice.” He preached a healing justice.

The challenge to Episcopalians is how to conceptualize a healing justice in the communities where we minister. This begins with understanding the theology of community offered by Bishop Shannon when he introduced himself to our Diocese. Anglican reason offers the ability to reflect on new understandings of justice and how we interpret the Scriptures in our cultural contexts.

There are different groups with different worldviews worshiping in our parishes, and the communities in which they are planted. What groups are in need of healing justice in your community? Let Prophet Amos be our guide in his condemnation of the old systems of justice and his plea for justice and righteousness. (Amos 5:10-17; 24)

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had a distinguished career as a tenured university professor and as Assistant Provost for Minority Group Affairs and Director of African American Studies at a major university. John L, as he is known, is engaged in a ministry of creating a world where it is easier to love, based on Paulo Freire’s idea of not only reading the Word but reading the Word and doing something about it.

Proper 24 | Luke 18:1-8

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Reflection Questions

- What groups are in need of healing justice in your community?
- How do you understand the relationship of justice, healing, mercy, and charity?
- Learn more about St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Colonial Beach at:

www.stmaryscolonialbeach.org

