

“LIVING GOD, YOU FORMED US IN THE WOMB AND APPOINTED US TO BE PROPHETS TO THE NATIONS.” SO READS THE ASCRIPTION LINE IN OPENING THE COLLECT FOR THE 11<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST FOR THE SEMI-CONTINUOUS READINGS OF THE REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY. THE COLLECT PREPARES US FOR READING WHICH FOLLOWS FROM THE PROPHET JEREMIAH.

JEREMIAH IS WRITING AND PREACHING TO THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH IN ITS CAPITAL JERUSALEM. IT IS A TIME OF HUGE UPHEAVAL, WITH ITS REPEATED ASSYRIAN INVASIONS CULMINATING IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE, THE CENTER OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH’S IDENTITY. LIKE BEING IN UKRAINE FOR REPEATED RUSSIAN INVASIONS OVER SEVERAL GENERATIONS.

IN OUR READING, GOD IS CALLING JEREMIAH TO PREACH TO THE RULERS AND SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM, OF JUDAH. THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH THE PREACHING REPEATEDLY CALLS THE PEOPLE TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE GOD OF JUSTICE AND COMPASSION. IT IS A CHALLENGING CALL IN A TIME WHERE THOSE IN POWER DON’T WANT TO BE CALLED OUT FOR SEEKING POWER AND WEALTH. THOSE IN POWER FEEL THEY ARE ENTITLED TO BE IN POWER. PART OF THEIR POWER IS TO DEMAND THAT THEIR OWN VERSION OF TRUTH BE ACCEPTED BY ALL. IT IS SCARY TO CALL ATTENTION TO SUCH POWER FOR A PREACHER. NORMALLY WE AVOID CONTACT WITH IT AND HOPE THE SIMPLE READING OF 2600 YEAR OLD TEXTS LIKE JEREMIAH WILL ACCOMPLISH HEALING AND CLEAR VISION. JEREMIAH IS RELUCTANT TO PREACH TRUTH TO POWER AND SAYS SO IN THIS PASSAGE REFERRED TO AS THE CALL OF JEREMIAH.

SO GOD REMINDS A RELUCTANT JEREMIAH OF THE FACT OF GOD’S CALL. “BEFORE I FORMED YOU IN THE WOMB I

KNOW YOU AND BEFORE YOU WERE BORN I CONSECRATED YOU. I CALLED YOU TO BE A PROPHET TO THE NATIONS.” JUST A REMINDER HERE THAT IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES PROPHET MEANS PREACHER, NOT SOME FORTUNE TELLER.

VERMONT AND SOME OTHER STATES HAVE JUST COMPLETED THEIR PRIMARIES SELECTING CANDIDATES TO RUN IN THE MID TERM ELECTIONS IN NOVEMBER. MANY OF THE CANDIDATES HAVE ALMOST CLAIMED TO BE SPEAKING WITH THE VOICE OF GOD. SEVERAL COLLECTIONS OF HISTORIANS SUCH AS DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN AND JOHN MEACHAM AND THE RECENTLY DECEASED MADELEINE ALBRIGHT HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT A TENDENCY TO DENY FACTS AND TO TWIST TRUTH TO SUIT THE POWER WISHES OF FACT DENIERS. AUTHORITARIANISM SEEMS TO GROW IN FAVOR IN A NUMBER OF NATIONS. IT FEELS LIKE A GENETIC TENDENCY FOR A NUMBER OF US.

A REPORT OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF OFFSPRING SHARING THEIR BEING WITH THEIR MOTHER IS SIMPLY ASTOUNDING TO ME. ACCORDING TO STUDIES AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL AND ELSEWHERE SOME CELLS OF THE FETUS SLIP THROUGH THE PLACENTA BOUNDARY AND BECOME PART OF THE MOTHER’S SYSTEM, LIVING IN HER FOR DECADES, AND PART OF HER T CELL SYSTEM, AND WHEN DISEASE OR ILLNESS THREATENS THE MOTHER, THESE CELLS NOW LIVING IN THE MOTHER ACTUALLY RALLY TO HER DEFENSE. THERE HAVE BEEN DOCUMENTED CASES WHERE THESE GIFTS FROM HER OFFSPRING ACTUALLY WIN HER MORE YEARS OF LIFE, EVEN, IN ONE REPORTED CASE RECOVERY FROM SEEMINGLY FATAL LIVER CANCER. I WONDER IF SPIRITUAL HEALING FREEING US FROM THE CAPTIVITY OF OUR BEING MIGHT COME TO AN INJURED MOTHER FROM HER OFFSPRING LIVING WITH AND IN HER?

AND NOW THERE IS STUDY AND SPECULATION ABOUT OTHER CHARACTERISTICS FROM OUR OFFSPRING HELPING US ELDER CITIZENS IN OUR COURSE OF LIFE. DO YOU SUPPOSE JEREMIAH SENSED SOMETHING OF THIS PATTERN?

ISABEL WILKERSON, IN HER PRIZE WINNING STUDY OF A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO TITLED *CASTE: THE ORIGINS OF OUR DISCONTENTS*, SPEAKS OF THE PHOTO OF THE A HUNDRED OR MORE SHIPYARD WORKERS IN HAMBURG IN GERMANY AS HITLER WAS FIRING UP HIS POWER AND PREPARING TO CREATE THE HOLOCAUST. SPEAKING OF WHICH WE ARE TO BE PRIVILEGED WITH ANOTHER KEN BURNS DOCUMENTARY EXAMINING THE HOLOCAUST AND US, ITS MEANING FOR US TODAY AS WE FACE THE OPPRESSIVE AUTHORITARIANS OUT THERE. SEPTEMBER 18 IS ITS PLAY DATE ON PUBLIC TELEVISION WITH THE TITLE “THE US AND THE HOLOCAUST.”

BACK TO THE 1936 PHOTO OF 100 OR SO SHIPYARD WORKERS RIGIDLY HEILING, HOLDING THAT HEIL HITLER SALUTE. A CLOSE LOOK AT THE PHOTO LETS US SEE A MAN IN THE UPPER RIGHT OF THE PICTURE WHO IS NOT HEILING, KEEPING HIS ARMS FOLDED ON HIS CHEST. ISABEL WILKERSON WELL DESCRIBES THE SCENE IN THE INTRODUCTORY ESSAY TO HER 2020 BOOK. HE IS ARYAN IN LOVE WITH A JEWISH WOMAN. HE HAD HEARD GOD’S MESSAGE IN HIS BEING. HE WOULD JOIN US IN SINGING GRANT US WISDOM GRANT US COURAGE, FROM OUR SEQUENCE HYMN.

IN LUKE’S GOSPEL TODAY JESUS INVITES A WOMAN TO BE HEALED FROM AN 18-YEARS LONG INFIRMITY THAT KEPT HER DOUBLED OVER SO THAT SHE SAW ONLY THE GROUND UNDER HER FEET. SHE IS NOT SEEKING HEALING. SHE MAY HAVE BECOME SO CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTNESS OF OPPRESSIVE LANGUAGE IN OUR DAY THAT WE ADHERE TO IT

AND STAY IMPRISONED BY IT. JESUS HAD THE COURAGE TO PREACH AND TO HEAL DESPITE THE AUTHORITIES FORBIDDING HIM TO DO SO. HE COULD NOT STAND BY AT THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH AND NOT PROVIDE THAT HEALING. ARE WE AS A PEOPLE TORN BY SUCH DEMANDS? WE HAVE BEGUN TO SERIOUSLY FACE OUR ROLE IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND EARTH DESTRUCTION, A ROLE WE DENIED FOR MORE THAN THE 18 YEARS THIS WOMAN JESUS HEALED IN THE SYNAGOGUE. WE HAVE BEGUN TO FACE OUR RACISM THANKS TO JESUS HEALING TOUCH. THOSE ARE TWO POSITIVE HEALING SIGNS, THAT WE HAVE BEGUN SUCH. WE HAVE BEGUN SUCH BECAUSE JESUS HEALING TOUCH IS GIVEN TO US AS WE GATHER TO WORSHIP.

AS WE GATHER TO WORSHIP, CALLED AND INVITED BY THE SPIRIT WORKING IN US, TOGETHER WE HOLD THE DOOR OPEN FOR EACH OTHER TO EXPERIENCE PERSONAL HEALING OF OUR MINDS AND PERCEPTIONS. THOSE PERCEPTIONS THAT KEEP US AS A PEOPLE STILL BENT OVER WE CAN LET GO AS WE SEE OURSELVES AS PART OF A SUFFERING HUMANITY SOME OF WHOSE SUFFERING IS OUR NATIONAL CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY. SO WE COME HERE PERHAPS STILL IMPRISONED BY OUR HARD WON CONVICTIONS THAT KEEP US STUCK IN A SELF DEFENSE POSTURE. WE MAY FIND OURSELVES UNABLE TO LET GO OF OUR VISION OF WHO WE ARE. BUTR WE GATHER HERE. IF I CAN'T FREE MYSELF AND OPEN MY OWN SPIRITUAL DOOR TO HEALING, YOU HELP ME, WE HELP EACH OTHER, AS WE SAY AND SING TOGETHER, TO HOLD THAT DOOR AJAR ENOUGH FOR HEALING TO COME IN. WE BEGIN TO SEE CHRIST IN EACH OTHER. WHAT A CHANGE OF POINT OF VIEW.

IT CAUSES US TO BE AWARE OF MOVEMENTS LIKE THE HILLSDALE COLLEGE MOVEMENT URGING FOLKS TO DENY KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PAST RESPONSIBILITY FOR

INDIGENOUS HOLOCAUSTS, OR 1930S AND 40S HOLOCAUSTS.  
SO WE SING AGAIN AND AGAIN THE PRAYER, GRANT US  
WISDOM, GRANT US COURAGE FOR THE LIVING OF THESE  
DAYS. AND THEN TO CONCLUDE AS WE DO TODAY “O FOR A  
THOUSAND TONGUE TO SING. HE SPEAKS AND LISTENING  
TO HIS VOICE NEW LIFE THE DEAD RECEIVE. THE  
MOURNFUL BROKEN HEARTS REJOICE. “ CHARLES WESLEY  
IN THAT HYMN HOLDS THE DOOR OPEN FOR US. “GLORY TO  
GOD AND PRAISE AND LOVE” WE SING AS WE JOIN HANDS  
ACROSS PARTY LINES TO HEAL OUR WORLD WITH JESUS  
TOUCH.” THEN WITH SAINTS BELOW, LIKE US WHO ARE  
HEAR PRESENT, AND WITH SAINTS ABOVE, WE JOIN IN  
SINGING GLORY TO GOD AND PRAISE AND LOVE, AS WE  
SHARE THE LOVE WE GIVE EACH OTHER SPIRITUALLY  
HELPING EACH OTHER TO REST INTO GOD’S PRESENCE WITH  
AND IN US,

GRANT US WISDOM GRANT US COURAGE.