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 Grace and Holy Trinity Church
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 Matthew 10:24-39

After reading our Lenten Book, “Just Mercy” by Bryan Stevenson, Amazon recommended a number of books that I might be interested in reading. One of them was highly rated and was free so I downloaded it on my Kindle and there it sat in my library until a few nights ago. I opened “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander, and read the first few pages after which was instantly transported back in time 10 years to my time as a community organizer for New Jersey Community Water Watch, an Americorps program.

Early on in my training for the program one of the directors explained that there are essentially 4 ways that a

person can be active in a movement. People can be helpers, advocates, organizers or rebels¹. A helper is hands on- feeding the hungry, cleaning up the beach, tutoring in schools. An advocate is focused on the big picture and working within the larger social structure to change the system- lawyers and lobbyists are advocates. An organizer gets people together to make a change - they can gather a group of helpers to make a larger impact or they can coordinate advocates to focus on a single issue. A rebel sees an issue and prefers to make a commotion of some kind to force those in authority to make a change- these are the people who lead marches and sit ins, these are the folks who are crying out for justice from the rooftops. In order for a

¹Adapted from the work of Bill Moyer, source <https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/bill-moyer-four-roles-of-social-change/> Accessed 6/22/2017.

movement to be effective and sustainable we were taught that all of these roles need to be present, engaged, and in communication with one another. No one group could always take the lead, rather they all should work in concert with one another.

Consider for a moment that the Church is the Ultimate movement. The stated mission to follow Jesus to bring about the Kingdom of God. We do this as individuals by living into our baptismal covenant, by praying together, learning scripture and proclaiming the good news, spending time together as a community of faith, seeking and serving all people, loving our neighbor as ourselves, respecting the dignity of every human being and returning to God when we sin.

Consider how at times each of us are are called to be helpers in this covenant -

seeking and serving, respecting all people. In other portions it is advocacy learning the scriptures, and applying them to our daily life and work, practicing prayer and worship together in common language and within the structure of the Episcopal Church. Organizing fellowship and common expectations. Rebelling against sin and returning again to the Lord when we fail to live into our right relationship with God.

Throughout the gospel of Matthew each of these roles are explored. Helpers are commissioned in the 25th chapter to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, quench the thirst of the thirsty, and visit the prisoner, as we have done for the least of these so have we done for Jesus.

Organizers are affirmed in their call when the disciples are sent into the world in the 28th chapter to baptize in the

name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit and make disciples of the nations. Advocates are encouraged to strive to fulfill the law not destroy it by Jesus' proclamation in the temple in the 5th chapter. But today's gospel message isn't for the helpers, organizers or advocates in our midst, today's gospel message is for the rebels. Those who want to break the system open and see some measurable and immediate change- this is your call-
 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set
 a man against his
 father,
 and a daughter against
 her mother,
 and a daughter-in-law
 against her mother-in-
 law;

and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Oh my.

As an organizer by training and a helper by calling today's Gospel message is hard for me to wrap my head around. I like my Jesus to be peaceful and loving and caring. I like the "Let the Children come to me Jesus" much more than the "I bring a sword Jesus". But Jesus is a multifaceted person. Not

just because he is the Son of God and the Son of Man, completely human and completely divine, but because his teachings and his lessons and his followers are not all cut from the same mold and not all geared toward the same audience.

Jesus' teachings provide an opportunity for all of us find a source of inspiration for the kind of disciple we are meant to be. Some of us are called to follow Jesus in a way that breaks relationships with our family of origin. Some of us are called to follow in the footsteps generations that have come before. Some of us are called to follow in a different tradition from our siblings. Some of us are called to leave the Church entirely. But ALL of us are equally called beloved. All of us are created in the

image of God. All of us are invited to pick up our cross and follow Christ.

Following Jesus is at once an act of helping and organizing of advocating and rebellion. Following Jesus is a choice. One cannot surpass Him because He is always before you. He is the Alpha, the beginning and He is the example which has been set for each of us to follow. When at the beginning of today's gospel Jesus give the example of the disciple not being greater than the teacher nor the slave greater than the master He is speaking to a community which understood the world in the context of a strict hierarchy. It can be hard for us to relate to this model, but for those who originally heard this lesson it was obvious that a teacher would not be

surpassed by a student nor would a slave rise up against master. In our culture students are encouraged to achieve greater success than their teachers, ala Good Will Hunting, and publicly condoned slavery has been abolished it is hard to imagine not wanting to succeed in this way.

As I thought about it this week, it was hard to imagine about how we as a community follow Jesus when at any point in time we may be called to help or organize or advocate or rebel. Not only in our individual lives are we called to these roles but all congregations are invited to do the same.

I wonder, where we at Grace and Holy Trinity are successfully living into the call that Christ has laid before us? Are we as a

community living into the multifaceted call that we hear in Matthew's Gospel? If so, where are we bringing the sword as rebels? Where are we fulfilling the law as advocates? Where are we encouraging discipleship as organizers? Where are we getting our hands dirty as helpers?

Let us strive to rebel, advocate, organize and help so that we can see more fully the kingdom which God has promised to all creation. Jesus has commissioned us. The Holy Spirit inspires us. Let us live into this calling fully as individuals, in this congregation, and ultimately as the Church.

Take up these crosses and follow Him.
Amen