

Monroe reflection
August 17, 2022,
Justice unto Righteousness
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In encountering the scripture readings for today and their challenges, I had to stop and take a breath. Today is about living according to God's desires as creator. The readings speak about vision.

We look to Jesus' words in Luke four as revealing a vision of his mission from God. A vision moves one to action. Jesus lived *into* and *out of* that vision. He called it: The Kingdom of Heaven, or the Reign of God.

Our Gospel today is a powerful parable from his teachings on its meaning:

Monika Helwig states the following:

- "The teaching of Jesus as presented to us in the Gospels has two dimensions." One is the human experience of the transcendent God, and the other is the human experience of human beings. The intimate way Jesus perceived God, (as Abba) was unique to Jesus' not learned from his tradition."
- What *does* come from the "Scribal tradition is an answer to *crushed and persecuted but faithful Jews*. It is *the promise* of God's own reckoning and in God's own way fulfilling human dreams beyond all imagining."

We hear such a response from God in the reading from Ezekiel. The Prophet reveals the revulsion God has for those who "pasture themselves" rather than care for the sheep. Their sin is they did not show justice, more, they did not show *love* to all who belong to God's family.

So, as promised, "Woe to you... I will look after and tend my sheep."

The scribes teaching to the oppressed say.

"*Live now* as though God reigned and no-one else had any power over you."

Jesus, in his own person, in his actions and words, extended a constant invitation to *trust* God and make the *leap of faith* involved in *welcoming* the Reign of God in ones life and community."

"(Jesus) attempts to coax others to *experience* their own vision- the experience of truly "living *now* as though God alone reigned and no-one else had power over you."

Is it possible to believe this way in the world in which we live?

How many times have we heard or even said, "Where is God in all of this?"

The parable confronts our present societal behaviors at the core.

What about Justice? It is certainly not *mere* tit for tat justice as our capitalistic society

would argue. Worse, many corporations and politicians are “shepherding themselves” while oppressing workers and affecting economic stability.

There must a be way to get ourselves out of the trap of consumerism and fear. What aspect of the reign of God does Jesus offer to us?

Jesus tells us of a larger vision where justice is fulfilled and it is called “righteousness.” This is not about the scourge of “self-righteous” people who feel they are justified to cast judgment on anyone who disagrees with their narrow views.

No, this kind of Righteousness “exists where people care for their neighbor and befriend them, concerned not merely that they get their due, but that their deepest personal needs are satisfied. “GUTD

A metaphor for this kind of justice, is the ethical vision of the Beloved Community that guided the movement of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It is “universal inclusion.”

What if this parable of Jesus, is a call to the justice where each is of *equal worth*. In the story each one had shown up for work but not all were given the same chance. However, in the end, they were all given what was “due” to them, according to the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven:
equal children of the one Abba God, all of the same family.

To what leap of faith are we being called in these times? Will I pray the parables until my heart experiences a conversion to that deep justice? What if I pray until my spirit is willing to risk real trust in the reign of God

How could that change me?

Resource: Jesus, The Compassion of God by Monica K. Hellwig
Racial Justice and the Catholic Church by Bryan N. Massingale 2020