

## Why Are You Here?

Wayne Waibel – 08/23/2020

Why would Jesus command His disciples to tell no one that He was the Messiah? What is it about rulers like Pharaoh that make them so insecure? How is it that the most arrogant and least wise of the disciples would become the rock on which Jesus would build His church? What form of logic dictates that a couple of midwives and a princess would be responsible for establishing a leader that would topple mighty Pharaoh in defiance of his specific commands? Why are you even here? The world is filled with mystery.

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There are knowns, and there are unknowns. There are absolutes and there are doubts. In the time of Moses, there was a king who dealt harshly with a race of people who neither expressed any non-compliance with the established order, nor warranted a significant threat by their numbers. Still the children of Israel were going to be treated as though they were a blight on the Egyptian way of life solely because a single ruler decided they were.

I sometimes wonder if the first requirement to conquest is to identify the single least adversarial culture as “enemy.” It’s awful convenient, and to anyone of character, exposes the powers that be for the true cowards they are, while at the same time seducing the masses into believing the perceived threat.

The cycle that has played out in history has this one constant that for some reason falls into the land of the forgotten over and over again. God has been and will always be at work bringing down the powerful from their thrones and lifting up the lowly. That’s why I’m here.

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When Jesus asks His disciples who they say He is, He’s really asking them “Why are you here?” He’s not so much looking for affirmation as teaching them what right thinking is all about. And right thinking is at a dangerously low level in our time. We are so hung up on what we are being told to care about, and because it’s an election year – what we should be adamantly opposed to – that there is very little room left in our collective psyches for right thinking.

Honestly, with the attention and energy directed at systematically tearing down the reigning administration – I marvel that any President gets re-elected to office. And at the end of the day – we’re still going to have to find a way to peacefully co-exist.

Fortunately, there are enough of us out there that can answer the question, “Why are you here?” with the retort, “Who wants to know?” I know it’s very Zenish to answer a question with a question, but that can often lead to the heart of the matter, and for people of faith, that heart is a continuum that began with creation: God’s sovereignty is manifest through compassion and care.

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When the apostle Paul charges “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,” he’s outlining a very radical theology at a time and in a place where such statements defy the ruling elite. Even though it’s radical – it’s nothing new.

“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them.” Righteous folk have been acting in defiance of human authority since the very beginning. The still, small voice that beckons you to say, “Who wants to know?” is not trying to be a smart aleck, it’s simply reminding you of your inner strength. By not conforming to the ways of the world, we are transformed to live oriented to God’s future. And in that, our whole life becomes an expression of devotion to God.

Shiphrah and Puah had no intention of following Pharaoh’s edict before he’d even finished issuing the command. Those things that are violent, spiteful or in any way other than loving – are not of God. Even Pharaoh’s own daughter acted in defiance. Why are you here? In the case of Pharaoh’s daughter and the midwives – to liberate a great nation.

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The service to which we all are called has with it - inherent risks, certainly. It also holds the keys to the kingdom to which we all belong. This service, and its resultant journey have been a resounding success because we answered the call.

I had a discussion toward the end of the week with a co-worker who listed all of the current shortcomings of our global condition from the coronavirus to social injustice. I posed the question, "And you're going to lay all of that at the feet of the current administration?" Their response was an immediate and impassioned "Yes I am!" I walked away laughing in disbelief. I hope they didn't feel insulted, but I simply had no articulate way of expressing myself.

Upon further reflection, I can easily reason that one of the great failings we have as a people, is our unceasing need to assign blame. We all do it to varying degrees, and it really puts a detour in our pursuit of truth, justice and understanding.

And while I feel shame as a result of that knowledge, I'm also filled with an abiding hope, because we know that it is in our weaknesses that Christ's strength is made apparent. So, in answer to the question, "Why are you here?" Same as it always was, "To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God." Amen.