

We've Got This

Wayne Waibel – 09/27/20

This is a pivotal moment in the gospel. It is where Jesus begins his journey to the cross. The passage leading up to today's reading describes how Jesus went into the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling – overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Then healed the blind and the lame resulting in great exaltation.

This singular act began the confrontation between the chief priests and the elders and Jesus the Christ. It is exactly what He had in mind as He mapped out His end game. Mankind generally looks upon His crucifixion as the brutality imposed by empire. Even the ruling elite of the temple felt as though they had a hand in His death. Truth is – He started it, and in so doing effectively ended the old ways.

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The real failure of the chief priests and elders is that they do not receive Jesus. All of the verbal sparring aside – they are simply outmatched in that arena anyway, and they know it. The foundation of their failure is in their predictable inability to understand who they are dealing with.

Theirs is a management model built on intimidation and privilege, not unlike their Roman oppressors. In that world, Jesus is a real troublemaker. Empowering the common folk is a sure way to get yourself on the hit list of anyone who thinks of themselves as superior. Jesus knows precisely what He is doing.

He was confronting the power structure of His time. It was more than a mere facing off, as it were. Jesus was in a very real sense – modeling the kind of behavior He expects from anyone who would be a disciple. Speaking truth to power. Even if that truth is inconvenient or unsettling.

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It would be nice if we could concentrate on one dilemma at a time. Then maybe we wouldn't be so divided not only on which side of the spectrum we land, but also on which catastrophe to even focus on!

Wildfires still rage in the west. We are at the height of hurricane season. Divisive politics is getting more heated and the seasons are shifting, so as we move indoors, we can expect our pandemic to gain momentum in the near term. Where does one focus their attention?

We can take our cue from the Apostle Paul:

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

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Here is this Jesus, who possesses all power and authority, and what does He use it for? To broaden our understanding of the meaning of the word love. A man who could with a glance – reduce the mightiest warrior to a blob of jello – instead stooping to raise a blind invalid to full stature, that he too, may know how it feels to matter. It is in these acts of benevolent grace that we find the recipe for our own redemption.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been placed within the Lord Jesus Christ. Not because He can handle it – which He can; or because that authority is well placed – which it is; but because there is no other that will use that authority to confound and claim every last one of us – which He does.

Sometimes I find myself sympathizing with the chief priests and the elders, because they haven't got a chance, and because I'm not that far removed from being just like them.

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All have sinned and fallen short of the kingdom of heaven – yes. And there is none good but the Father – I know. Despite these facts – we are all charged to live justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. Not only because it's the right thing to do, but others – also – need to see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

There are some who cower at the thought of the dark days ahead. But in this community of faith there is a profound effort to rejoice. And it is a rejoicing on two separate and distinct fronts.

Not only do we have a deep and abiding sense of gratitude because of what we know to be true in our faith and our mission, but also as an act of defiance against those who would have us believe that all is lost – we are a nation of arrogant heathens, bent on self-destruction. Mainstream religion has been on the decline for so long that the trend appears irreversible.

All is NOT lost – reports of the decline of western civilization are grossly exaggerated. I submit to you that as a people, we are on the threshold of a greatness. While anarchy seems to be the prevailing activity of the masses and we appear to be tearing ourselves apart in the political arena – there resides still – a growing number of disciples who possess a particular set of skills. The vast majority of us are driven by a lowliness of mind that esteems others above ourselves.

Our Savior went toe to toe with the designated authorities of His time and prevailed. How much more will we in our time as beneficiaries of that most noble cause, be lifted in our hearts to know with a certainty that we've got this? Amen.