



*Hands, all together, Avondale Pattillo UMC, Decatur, GA 2007*

Greetings!

Please read [Luke 6:27-38](#)

Today's passage from Luke demonstrates an important strategy on non-violent resistance from the teachings of Jesus regarding Rome. Rome dominated the region and established a far reaching empire that included multiple cultures and countries. No doubt there were resistance movements in many locations, but we include an amazing resistance movement within our scriptures as Christians. Both Jews and Christians share this history and commitment to freedom. Jesus in today's Gospel lesson speaks of loving enemies, What? Oh my! Resistance!



*Reconciliation, Amos Supini, Woerden, Netherlands*

In considering Christian tradition, Jesus said God's kingdom *is at hand*. This is understood by Romans and their collaborators as a direct affront to Caesar as King, suggesting that his kingdom is not "ultimate." ([peacetheology.net](#))

In addition to this major challenge to Rome and the King Caesar, consider these portions of resistance texts as well:

- Jesus' power over demons, linked on occasion with Roman legions ( [Mark 5:9](#); [Luke 8:30](#))
- Rejection of Roman authorities over the people ( [Mark 10:42](#))
- Taxes, Caesar and money ( [Mark 12:17](#))
- Jesus kingdom ( [John 18:36](#))
- Compelling the Jew to carry the pack ( [Matthew 5:41](#))

Each of these passages offers a strategy of resistance against the Empire. Jesus was interested in offering hope and giving people a teaching on how to bring change from within. Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God is about freeing people up to serve God. Other kingdoms and systems of oppression are about hemming people in – to be

compliant to the powers that be. And there are those who try to have it both ways but never end up in a place of satisfaction. Jesus even said once, "You cannot serve two masters." In addition to the resistance, oppression and movement already mentioned, collaboration is addressed by Jesus throughout the Gospels.

***There was a small religious party, the Sadducees, who were collaborationists, that supported the status quo and accepted official posts under the Romans.... The High Priest himself was a Sadducee, and it is one of the most important points to grasp in New Testament studies that the High Priest was appointed by the Romans. As a member of a quisling minority group he was regarded with contempt by the great mass of the nation. Religious authority lay not with the priests but with an entirely different body of people called the Rabbis, the leaders of the Pharisees. (Jesus and the Jewish Resistance)***



Love Your Enemies, Vanderbilt Divinity Library

With this in mind, the passage at hand today is about connecting two resistance movements together with Jesus as leaders of both. The resistance of Rome and the resistance of the collaborators. The teachings of Jesus offer us a strategy for bringing the Kingdom of God. Like Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi used this strategy in India for the purpose of national independence - non-violent, civil disobedience. The methodologies of Jesus laid bare the collaborators and the Empire. But Jesus' timeless teachings speak to all generations and give hope to the oppressed.

February is **Black History Month** in the United States. During this time we share stories related to the strategy instilled deeply in the DNA of Judeo Christian experience and how it is lived out in the Black experience, something unique to the United States of America. That experience draws from the scriptures and narrative remembering the plight of Israel at the hands of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Rome. In their totality, the teachings of Jesus and historical Judaism became the catalyst of the modern Civil Rights movement which marked the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues today.

***The Equal Justice Initiative*** has produced a calendar which marks historical events for each day of the year that have impacted the movement. For Sunday, February 20, the story that is remembered is from Montgomery, Alabama. On this date in 1956, a number of persons were arrested for participating in a boycott of the public transit system. To read these stories on the calendar each day while letting the Gospel lesson for this Sunday wash over us demonstrates great power. This power is found in cultural competency, personal awareness, emotional intelligence, social location and many other very personal tools which bring into focus the radical nature of the Discipleship taught by Jesus. ***To love our enemies, to turn the other cheek, to live the golden rule, to choose mercy, to forgive and not to judge***, these are a call that will require our very last ounce of attention.

So on this day, read this text from Luke. Likewise re-read our Baptismal Service found in your United Methodist Hymnal. Let them be companions with us on the journey as

we join Jesus in His movement of true freedom in the Kingdom of God.

**I'll close with a few questions for you:**

- When was a time you resisted in the style of Jesus?
- Who has most influenced you in your discipleship?
- How are you living into your baptismal call?
- What evils are you resisting?
- Who can resource you for your journey?

**Prayer**

O God who welcomes all in love,  
let us pray for the good of the church  
and the concerns of those in need.

*Offer Your Petitions, concluding with:*

God of every land and nation,  
you have created all people  
and you dwell among us in Jesus Christ.

Listen to the cries of those who pray to you,  
and grant that, as we proclaim the greatness of your name,  
all people will know the power of love at work in the world.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Peace,



Rev. Dr. Todd D. Anderson, West Ohio Superintendent  
Ohio River Valley District, United Methodist Church

