

February 17, 2019

Sermon on the Plain - from UCC NATIONAL

Nothing is ever the same after Jesus talk gets in your brain. When he preached on that hillside, as reported in Luke's gospel, and began with "Blessed are you who are poor" there must have been more than a few taking those words out into the Roman empire. The church later spread those words, upending the way people thought the world worked. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, and who weep now, for everything will change." These words burned in the hearts of many in the ensuing centuries. These words that instigated change with an emphasis on the marginalized and the outcasts and those excluded from the great and powerful rooms where important decisions get made. These words grew from the bottom of society not from the top. Jesus knew that change happens from the bottom up, not from the top down.

If we are going to really call into being "A Just World for All" then we need to start preaching to the bottom from the bottom. Take racism, for example. Take it as an example of something woven into our world that creates suffering to benefit others. Jesus said blessed are those on the bottom not blessed those who oppress and stigmatize. The unraveling of the sin of racism begins in Jesus words getting inside our brains so that the world will never be the same.

A group of young people, ages 11-24, met this summer for a week in the basement of Bethany UCC in Seattle, Washington. They met there to learn and talk about dismantling racism for the sake of the world. For 17 years, this pop up social justice program has spread the word so that we, as a nation, might absolve our past by inoculating the present with visions of an aspirational nation. An aspirational vision that believes Jesus' words about hope.

Those words reorder our perceptions of the poor and move us from blaming poverty on individuals. It lifts our eyes to see the systemic forces that keep people on the bottom. Forces like lack of health care, poor education, stagnant wages, racism, segregation, lack of affordable housing and more. When Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are poor," believe him and let those words get inside your brain so they might change the world. What action can you take to fight for the powerless?

Something to consider.