

FCCS November 2, 2019  
Rev. Curran Reichert

### Holy Resistance Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

There once lived a man, a religious man he was, the son of a Calvinist preacher; Brother Roger he was called. He started a movement at the end of the Second World War, an ecumenical movement dedicated to the ideals of international peace and reconciliation between Christians. In his lifetime, Brother Roger was the recipient of much honor and laud for his humanitarian work, he was then and is still, best known for founding a one of a kind monastic community called Taizé located in the south-east of France.

Brother Roger was a devout follower of Jesus. He understood Jesus' call to resist division and reject separation. His entire life was devoted to creating oneness among God's people. Brother Roger's life was one of positive resistance through love.

In April 2005 at the funeral of Pope John Paul II, Brother Roger received communion from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, this caused quite a stir and led to speculation that he must have secretly converted from Protestantism to Catholicism, otherwise how could this be for Protestants are not allowed to take communion at the Catholic table, especially not at the Vatican. After his untimely death just a few months later, it was determined once and for certain that Brother Roger had not converted to Catholicism, he had simply refused to accept that there be any division at the Lord's table; non-violent resistance in action.

In an era where people under thirty are turning away from organized religion in droves, over 100,000 young people from around the world continue to make pilgrimages to Taizé each year for prayer, Bible study, sharing, and communal work.

Here in the Bay Area, Mercy Center in Burlingame attracts exceptionally large intergenerational crowds for its monthly Taize services. Participating in communities of spiritual practice-that is a form of positive resistance.

We are blessed to have a Taize Team of our very own who work with Jim McFadden (the lead musician at the Methodist Church) to create a magical service in this very sanctuary every second Friday of the month at 4pm. It has always been my goal to provide opportunities for folks to regroup between Sunday services; with Taize once a month and Wisdom Circle the first and third Thursdays we well on our way. I hope you'll all take advantage of the opportunities available to settle and center. Getting grounded is a form of non-violent, positive resistance.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to name inequity, to bridge the gaps that keep people separated, called to strengthen our own voices to speak out on behalf of those whose voices have been silenced. We are called to subvert the dominant paradigm by engaging forms of non-violent, positive resistance.

This is not just your liberal preacher talking here, this is straight out of the parables both last week and this. Jesus recognized that religious people in particular tend to get complacent he called them on it regularly. Religious people especially have a tendency to claim ethical superiority and it is in those moment that Jesus demands their attention. Calling out and lifting up odd fellows with no moral standing like the weeping tax collector last week and Zacchaeus today. This is least shall be first and first shall be last kind of resistance. This is systemic resistance; this is the work of those who seek to follow in the ways of Jesus.

The church as we know it is often caught between a rock and a hard place, we go about our business doing what we think we ought to be doing, and just when we think we have that figured out new needs arise that demand our faithful attention. Sometimes that means abandoning the structures and rhythms that bring us comfort. Sometimes the most faithful response we can offer is to allow ourselves to be disrupted.

Most of us we prefer our church life to be all figured out especially when things around us are feel out of our control- but I think we are in one of those moments now where we need to stay in the disruption.

Sure, power is back on and most of us will be back to school and work this week, but plenty of people not too far from here are left completely unhinged. The scorched earth has not yet cooled and I think we might do well to pause a little longer; to listen to the cries of the earth in order to prayerfully respond. To listen to the stories of those whose incomes were painfully impacted, those displaced or discouraged.

If we pause, if we listen, and genuinely look into the eyes of the people around us we will notice that just like last time, trauma takes awhile to settle. Maybe choosing to move a little slower than normal, even when life around us is ramping up is what positive resistance looks like in the wake of the Kinkadee fire.

Today we will gather around the communion table, a table where all are welcome, no exceptions, thank you Brother Roger. The good news about the feast of God is that we will be met here- where we are- and given bread for the journey ahead.

In other words, the gifts of this table are freely given to all of us as works in progress and that is indeed good news. So, as you prepare your hearts to receive the bread of life and the cup of love take a moment to check in with your soul, then come just as you are to be fed and nourished by the grace of God.

Amen