March 4, 2018

Third Sunday of Lent, Cycle B

Ex 20:1-17
1 Cor 1:22-25
Jn 2:13-25

By Don Timmerman

One of the commercials aired on TV during the last Super Bowl was put out by Daimler Chrysler. They were selling Dodge trucks using one of the famous quotes of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Many of us had difficulty with this. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was a Christian, was opposed to commercialism and the capitalistic notion which deems the importance of a person according to how much wealth one has, and sees no problem in taking advantage of others for the sake of making more and more money. The ad also depicted a servant as one who is in the military. Dr. King was opposed to all war and fighting to get what one wants. When Dr. King referred to one who serves he was not referring to the military but rather the ones who teach, fight fires, and practice nonviolence. The ad disrespects Dr. King and all he stood for as a Christian. Today’s gospel shows how Christ is angered by such actions.

An example of what Christ stood for and practiced is shown in today’s Gospel. He went into the Temple and saw people selling animals which were needed by the Jewish people to offer sacrifice to God. The larger the animal the greater the sacrifice made to God. Christ was offended by this activity because they were using a sacred temple as a place to make money. The poorer Jews who did not own animals were required to offer animal sacrifices during the Passover so they needed to buy animals to sacrifice, and usually were asked by the money changers for much more money than the animals were worth. Christ was offended by the injustice of this. No one should be making money using unjust means, and doing it in the house of God. He was very angry and stopped the unjust activity. The money changers, according to the Gospel, were thrown out, tables overturned and animals put outside the temple.

Many Christians use this Gospel as justification for doing violence to others. They say that since Christ turned over tables, chased people and animals out, probably in not so polite a way, that we have the right to do the same to our enemies. They justify war, weapons and military actions using this particular Gospel. I am pretty sure when Christ said “Love your enemies” he probably meant don’t kill them.

Christ was opposed to war, violence and injustice. He was angry at the injustice being done. Being angry is not being violent. Violence is the injustice done by those who take advantage of the poor and weak. Violence is the injustice of killing others or harming others by taking away their means of survival. This is happening today as it was yesterday and so many years ago. The U.S. is involved in 6 wars right now. It has dropped bombs on many villages in these countries killing many innocent people and destroying their way of life. Many had to try and seek refuge in other countries, sometimes dying in the process on
the sea and land. Why does the U.S. do this? It does this for the same reason the money changers in the Temple did their activity. For profits! The U.S. military spends over 50% of taxpayer money in the discretionary budget for war and weapons. According to Fiscal Times, it cannot account for $6.5 Trillion it was given by taxpayers. The military now says it is impossible to have a full audit done on how the money it is given is used. So there is minimal accountability. The injustice is that the $6.5 Trillion could have been used to provide for the needy of the world...for food, water, sanitation, schooling, health clinics, etc. The ones who profit off of war are the manufacturers of war, the military personnel and others of the military industrial corporation.

Are we angry about this injustice? Would Christ have been angry with this situation? It is time to throw out the money changers for the sake of protecting the masses who suffer from the injustice of others. What are we doing to correct the injustice?

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