

Luke 8:1-3; 23:49; 23:55-56; 24:1-10
Peace Sunday

November 6, 2016
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THE PULL TO JUSTICE
[written in oral form]

We have a peculiar set of passages as texts for this Sunday.

They are citations of women being present in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Noteworthy, is their key role in the resurrection narrative.

That part is important, yet what is even more significant is the fact that they are even mentioned....at all. A couple of references are just noting their presence. They are not in the action; they are just there. Moreover, names are recorded, too.

Also, there are other passages that reveal their common and active presence in Jesus' life.

In addition, Jesus would sometimes tell parables in pairs: one would feature a woman and the other a man.

Even Paul, though we think he devalued women, he actually elevated them in stature, and granted them more respect and rights.

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Keep in mind, the time and place of this writing.

Back then, women were generally regarded as property, and to be sure, they were considered inferior to men with fewer and weaker rights under the law.

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These passages, represent a Biblical statement that declares, in essence:

Women's Lives Matter.

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The old, unjust system was being challenged.

Jesus, the Gospel writers and the New Testament church were pushing for justice. They were pushing towards gender equality.

In a sense, they were radicals: gadflies upsetting the establishment.

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Indeed,... but we are Not there, yet. There is still inequality, and we have a way to go in many other areas where there's injustice.

That is why we need and **have** many caring, passionate people Pushing for equality / pushing for justice.

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A considerable amount of people in our congregation are working to make the world a better place,...through advocacy, education, healing, nurture and supportive ministries.

I think most of us are engaged, in one way or another, in pushing for peace and justice.

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I going to digress for a moment.

A big part of who we are is sanctuary and a recharge centre for those pushing hard for peace and justice.

We offer each other restoration through community, care and worship. We offer renewal, and that is wonderful.

It is good to nourish the body, including the body of Christ.
We need not feel guilty for Not being a church doing manic ministry--constantly reaching out / constantly engaged / constantly draining and bleeding the body to exhaustion.

Christ did that already.

It's okay to rejuvenate the body.....our body, emotions and soul.

We can feel good about who we are, and besides:

we are active doing justice and working for equality, too.

We have a very welcoming "Welcome statement", and we are actively doing peace and justice in numerous other ways.

Nevertheless, pushing against injustice is draining and tiring. We need to recharge. We need a place to rest and to find encouragement through each other,.....and from the Bible.

It is hard, and it can feel overwhelming pushing for peace and justice.

There are powerful forces resisting change.

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The Weapons industry is gigantic, and their tools of destruction are more lethal..... and plentiful than ever.

That industry is powerful and influential.

Consider, in spite of widespread protest, our government will not cancel the arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

Also, powerful, influential and still getting favours from the government, is the fossil fuel industry.

Even though, extracting more will be catastrophic to the earth's climate...and human welfare.

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Women continue to be objectified in songs,.... on university campuses....and in the entertainment media.

And, ... pornography is growing and more accessible.

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Violence.... is still a concern. Movies celebrate redemptive violence.

There are extreme sports that are quite violent, ... and we still try to solve international conflicts with violence.

\*Nevertheless:

there is a growing concern about violence in sports. Concussions are finally being addressed. There is less fighting, too.

Bullying, used to petition the call to fight back, it is now taboo. Our culture no longer accepts bullying.

In addition, peace and non-violent solutions to problems are now part of the conversation. We ARE experiencing fewer wars.

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In regards to women's equality: we are making significant progress.

We see it in government and in popular culture.

Male predation and objectifying women is Not cool.

James Bond is no longer a predatory sleaze.

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Also, in spite of stiff resistance, environmental awareness and action is increasing. We use fewer chemical. People are being less wasteful.  
Industries are going truly green, and not just green washing.  
There are signs that our government is shifting. People want sustainability,.... we want a healthy future for our children.  
The tide is beginning to turn.

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A good example of this progress is the evolution of the United Nations.

In the early years of the UN, its primary focus was to prevent another world war.

In 1950 the UN went to war in Korea.
By 1956, thanks in part to Lester Pearson, the UN removed violence as a tool for peacekeepers. UN peacekeepers entered into the Suez crisis unarmed.

In the 1960's the United Nations took on poverty and hunger, then diseases and economic disparity.

In the 70's they moved to counter the influences of the wealthy countries over the developing ones.

1979 marked the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

The 8 Millennium Development Goals was launched in the year 2000.

Starting this year, is the Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17, covering a broad range of concerns and injustices, and it was approved by 193 countries.
We humans are progressing.

*Against colossal opposition, the push for justice continues.
Against the powers of greed and fear that tolerates destruction and dehumanization,.....the arc of justice is bending for the better.
Against unbelievable political clout and deep financial pockets,... progress IS happening.
Even so, there is much more to be done. Racism and indigenous concerns continue to be problems.
Yet, awareness is spreading.

This is happening, in part, because of all the brave people who are pushing for peace and justice.
Even small protests/ even statements of hope and grace contribute to peace and justice.

To be sure,....this push for justice is Not new.
The NT is nearly 2,000 years old, and this movement began long before the time of Christ.
The mosaic laws, jubilee and the prophets pushed for more justice/ more acceptance / more equality.

Still, the forces of greed, the lust for power and keeping the status quo are enormous obstacles, especially in comparison to the voices pushing back.

I think it is obvious that there is more to this than just a human push.

Progress would not happen by mere human effort alone.
There is a pull to justice.....a divine pull.

Since, before recorded stories, God has been pulling humanity to evolve beyond the lizard brain.

Listen to the words of Isaiah:

The SPIRIT of the Lord God is upon me.....to bring good news to the oppressed.....to
proclaim liberty to the captives,...and so on.

God is pulling people to justice.
God is calling us to push for justice.

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All that was ugly and unjust killed Jesus,.....but Jesus lived on.

And, who was there to introduce the resurrection era?

Women! And, we know their names.

The ignored, exploited half of the population were given the leading role in proclaiming the news.  
You have to love the beauty of that story / the wondrous divine pull.

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The front of the bulletin presents the scale of justice out of balance.

We tend to focus on empowering the weak / on pushing for them to gain more weight / more power.
We rightly push for justice by helping the weak and exploited.

I think God's pull...pushes us to push.....and.... pulls to lighten the weight of injustice.

That divine pull.....likely includes all in a position of power, and that may include you and me.

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I do recall reading something in the Bible about letting go... and trusting God.  
And, so the journey to justice with God continues.