

Exploring Gospel NONVIOLENCE- 1

The Courageous Nonviolence of Jesus

The nonviolence of Jesus is *not*

passive - He did not shrink from conflict: went to Jerusalem knowing that he would be killed. (Mt 20: 17-19)

meek and mild - He stood up to the powerful.

defeatist - He seizes the initiative, asks, or does, the unexpected. Whose head is on the coin? (Mk 12: 13-17) Rides into Jerusalem on a donkey not a warhorse. (Mt 21:1-11)

The nonviolence of Jesus is a positive force *for*

healing - individuals by his compassionate love, humanity by suffering a violent death on the cross with forgiveness

restoring - rejected people to community, sinful people to relationship with God and justice with each other

asserting - human dignity, equality, and access to God's love and forgiveness for those who repent and believe

The nonviolence of Jesus

Challenges the culture and status quo to demonstrate God's inclusiveness

- Jesus related to the presence of God in everyone including those outcast or shunned - prostitutes, lepers, the poor... eating with tax-collectors and sinners (Mk 2: 15-17) Simon the leper (Mk 14:3) Zacchaeus the wealthy tax collector (Lk 19: 1-10)
- His message goes beyond the house of Israel. Samaritans shown to be good (Lk 10: 25-37) and grateful (Lk 17: 11-19) Canaanite women's faith (Mt 15: 21-28)

Breaks the rules sometimes to demonstrate what is important to God

- On the Sabbath - picking up grain (Mk 2:23-28) healing the man with withered hand (Mk 3: 1-6) and blind man (Jn 9:13-16)
- His disciples not washing hands (Mk 7: 1-13) or fasting like those of John or the Pharisees (Mk:2: 18-20)
- Speaking to the Samaritan woman alone at the well (Jn 4: 5-42) touching the woman with the haemorrhage (Mk 5: 25-34)

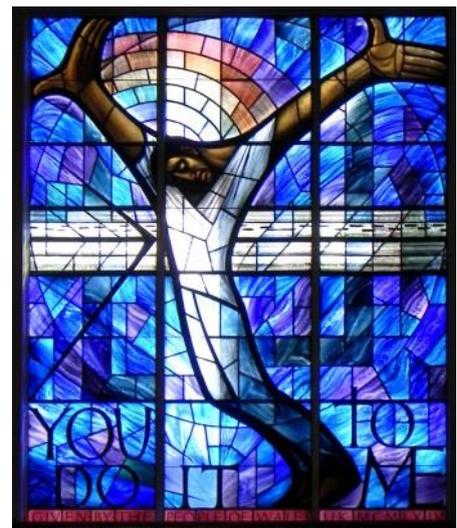


Image of a stained glass window in the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama. Welsh artist John Petts made the window after hearing that four young girls had been killed when the church was bombed in a racist attack one Sunday morning in 1963. His black Jesus shows the two hands of nonviolence: one stopping the oppression, the other reaching out in forgiveness and reconciliation. The window was donated to the church by the people of Wales

Confronts the powerful

- Jesus exposes and names hypocrisy - Counting dill and cumin but neglecting justice and mercy 'You snakes; you brood of vipers!' (Mt 23)
- Exploitation by money-changers - his prophetic demonstration provoked the chief priests and scribes (Mk 11: 15-19)
- Speaking truth to power - the Pharisees (Mt 21:23-27; Jn 8:3-11) and Roman governor Pilate (Jn 18: 33-40) Herod the fox (Lk 13: 31-32) in a fearless and authoritative way that commanded respect
- Limits to co-operation - render to Caesar *only* what is Caesar's (Mk 12: 13-17)

Accepts suffering willingly, but does not inflict suffering

- Rejected offer of retaliation by James and John, 'sons of thunder', for insult by Samaritan village (Lk 9:51-56) and of follower who used sword in Gethsemane (Mt 26: 49-55)
- Armed only with truth and love - absolute nonviolence of the cross as way to resurrection
- Infinite forgiveness (Mt 18:21-22) the Lord's prayer (Mt 6: 9-15)
- Love your enemies (Mt 5: 43-48)
- Jesus knew when it was wise to withdraw from a violent situation: 'he passed through the midst of them and went on his way' (Lk 4:28-29) 'Jesus hid himself, and disappeared from the Temple' (Jn 8:59) Advice to disciples: 'when they persecute you in one town flee to another'. (Mt 10:23)

For more on the nonviolent Jesus



- Contemporary scriptural exegesis & ethics on Jesus' nonviolence by Dr Terrence Rynne: <http://tinyurl.com/Jesus-Nonviolence>
- PowerPoint Presentation on the Nonviolence of Jesus based on Matt 5: 38-41 interpreted by Walter Wink. A simple 9 slide presentation illustrated by David Rumsey: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/nonviolence-in-action/>



Pax Christi

www.paxchristi.org.uk



Catholic Nonviolence Initiative

www.nonviolencejustpeace.net