

Jesus came to a world full of Principalities and Powers colluding in a Domination System...

Roman occupation, Herod's rule, system of taxation, Pharisaical religion, etc.

Jesus came with a new order and a new way of being in the world—a radical new way

The Principalities and Powers did what they always do—tried to eradicate the new order

At any sign of God's new order, the Powers suppress it and crush it

In Jesus' case, they killed him—crucifying Jesus on a cross—thinking they stopped it

But Jesus didn't stay dead—the Principalities and Powers failed to hold him

In the resurrection, Jesus overcame evil

However, Jesus didn't just overcome the Principalities and Powers of his day

Rather Jesus resurrection trumped evil for all time

Never again will evil have the last word—it has been defeated

We too must die to the control of the Powers

One doesn't become free from the Powers and Principalities by confronting and attacking them

Rather we die to their control

Scripture is full of passages that talk about dying in the baptism of death

Of letting the old ways and sense of ego fall off

Of giving up our own sense of control

We die to the systems of violence and the power to overthrow that which oppresses

We die to the ability to keep ourselves safe—or for the Powers to keep us safe

As Jesus said, those who lose their lives for my sake will find it

Dying to the Powers isn't about saving ourselves—saving our souls

Rather it is making ourselves expendable in the effort to rein in the Powers

When Jesus said those who lose their lives for his sake, keep it

He was drawing a line in the sand and asking if we will cross it with him

Will we step away from a world that depends on violence as the solution?

To a place where violence is finally broken by those willing to absorb its impact?

In that we are reborn to a new way of being—a new life in Christ—resurrection life with God

A new life that is not held together by the Powers and Principalities, but by God

We confound the Powers by praising God—it is counterintuitive, but it changes the ground underneath

Praise puts every creature in its proper relationship to the Creator

Praise allows us to right ourselves in the midst of things gone wrong

Praise reminds the Powers to whom they belong—it reminds the Powers of their Divine purpose

I learned this when I killed a lamb in Bolivia and was helpless to do anything about it

My Power destroyed a life and frightened the young boy watching the lambs that day

I felt cruel and upset and unable to right my wrong—left me pretty depressed

Not having anything else to do, I began slowly to sing songs of praise to God

With time, I began to feel better and relaxed—I saw things in a better perspective

The next day, we were asked about the incident and I was able to pay for the lamb

But it has always felt as if the turning point was beginning to praise God

Jesus practiced nonviolent engagement with the Powers—see it with the Pharisees and religious leaders

Also with his counsel to turn the other cheek—which is not a passive submission to more abuse

Rather invite the oppressor to hit you again but only by hitting you as an equal

Find Jesus third way, responding with nonviolence yet demanding that you be treated equally

Rehearse nonviolence—practice nonviolence

We get so caught up in the myth of redemptive violence, we don't believe nonviolence works
We ask hypothetical questions—what if you/family were attacked? What about Hitler?
We are less afraid of trusting violence to save us than of acting nonviolently and trusting God
But violence perpetuates the evil of the Powers and Principalities
Violence only begets more violence—violence invites evil to enter and begin to control
We need to read stories and watch movies of nonviolent action effecting change
Also to step away from filling our minds with stories of violence—even when good wins
For ourselves, practice responding with grace and Listening
Am I willing to give up the "God of guaranteed safety" that I demand from redemptive violence?
Growing up fighting with my brother became a pattern
Remember my shock when I wanted to hit a friend while in college—I grabbed my hand
We need to practice nonviolence so that it becomes our pattern, our natural way

We follow Jesus and love our enemies

Look for and find God in our enemies—find God in the other
Challenge after 9/11 to find God in the Muslim
"Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend." Martin Luther King Jr
Practice finding God in others—practice loving the unlovable—practice seeing the good in all
Historically Quakers have been good at this
But we need a personal practice to ready us for the more challenging times

Ultimately, way forward is through prayer

Through prayer we visualize a new future—a transformation of what is to what can be
It sees the true divine purpose of the Powers and Principalities holding up that purpose as future
If I have accepted injustice as the path/end—I will not see justice enacted
If I do violence to injustice—I have perpetuated injustice through my own violence
Only as I see a new future and live into that future both in prayer and actions, can change come
Those who pray—believe the future into being
Those who pray in community do so with greater power and clarity
In prayer, we do not just bring our sense of what we want to see and say, God, please do this...
Rather, we gather and Listen for how God would have us pray into the situations we see
God, what is your heart for this...
How would you have us pray? What is way forward?
Action, if there is any, comes out of prayer—out of seeing way forward and knowing I'm to do it
Prayer is not passive—it combines with loving enemies, nonviolent engagement, praising God...

The goal is not only for us to be free of the Powers and Principalities—to throw off that which ensnares

But to free the Powers to live into their Divine purpose
That Christ is not only reconciling people to God in spite of the Powers
But Christ is also reconciling the Powers to God
Not just breaking the idolatrous spells of the Powers over people
But breaking the Powers' ability to cast idolatrous spells over people
Only God can save the world—our task is to witness to the freedom of human life
To acknowledge that God is sufficient for us, whatever the Powers do

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39 KJV