

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

Seminarian Jessie Edelman

October 22, 2017

There has been a campaign on social media this week that I am going to talk about. The movement can stir a lot of different memories and emotions, so at any point if it is harmful or hurtful for you to listen to then I invite you move around the space as you find necessary. There are restrooms and some private rooms downstairs. Please take what you need.

This past week, my Facebook feed was covered with status updates saying, “Me Too.” I am sure that I am not the only one who encountered these two words over and over again, but in case you are not on Facebook or Twitter or didn’t encounter it

let me give a little background.

Last Sunday Alyssa Milano tweeted, “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet.” She wrote that in response to a movie producer being charged with years worth of sexual harassment. Although this was the first time that I was exposed to the “Me Too” movement, it actually started in 2006 by Tarana Burke, founder of Just Be Inc, “a youth organization focused on the health, well being, and wholeness of young women of color.” Burke’s “goal was to let women who have suffered sexual abuse, assault or exploitation know that they are not alone and to build an extended network of women who could empathize with survivors¹.”

¹ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2017/10/18/me-too-movement-origins/776963001/>

Reading status after status was difficult in and of itself, but it was especially difficult for me as a reader because I was sexually assaulted when I was 19, but I didn't realize it, or maybe I couldn't admit it until just this last year.

The stories of the people who have been sexually harassed or assaulted – whether they posted online or not – are true and they are stories about bodies and boundaries being violated.

So too, in today's Gospel text we are introduced to the violation of bodies and boundaries. We read that the Pharisees and the Herodians were trying to set Jesus up so that he would be exposed, arrested, and killed. And in so doing, they were trying to violate Jesus' boundaries and ultimately his body.

This interaction with the Pharisees and the Herodians, these religious and political leaders at the time, took place during what we know now as Holy Week. Jesus had just had this triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. This encounter with Jesus is the first of several encounters within this holy week of leaders at the time trying to trick or *entrap* Jesus by getting him in trouble with the Roman empire or in trouble with the Jewish people.

If Jesus said to the religious and political leaders, "Yes! Pay the tax!" then he might have freed himself from the Roman authorities, but then scandalized the religious establishment whose support was his best protection against arrest. But then if he ruled that even to carry a coin with such an inscription and image of the emperor was blasphemy, then he might reinforce his religious support but expose himself as someone obviously against the Roman authorities². So Jesus was being set up to say either, "pay the tax" or "forget the tax." But either way he would be in trouble.

In the text, Jesus received the question and was "aware of their malice, [and] said...'Show me the coin used for the tax.'" When they brought him the denarius he

² Richard E. Spalding, *Feasting on the Word*

said to them, “Whose head is this and whose title? They answered, “The emperor’s.’ Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” With one sentence the Pharisees and the Herodians “were amazed; and they left him and went away.”

“They left him and went away.” I wonder what Jesus felt as they went on their way. Did Jesus feel powerful by silencing his challengers? Did Jesus feel a longing for further conversation? I imagine that Jesus felt like his boundaries were violated because he knew that the Pharisees and the Herodians were trying to set him up so that he would be exposed and killed.

Remember this took place during the week leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross. The time when Jesus’ body was violated by the people that were against him.

Each week we gather at the table

And we remember

With the words said before the meal

“In the night in which he was betrayed,

Our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;

Broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:³”

“Me too.”

“Again after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,

And gave it for all to drink saying:⁴”

“Me too.”

³ ELW Leader’s Desk Edition, pg 239

⁴ Ibid.

As we eat Christ's body

And drink Christ's blood

We are reminded of the importance and the holiness of bodies and boundaries that are too often violated.

But when we know that others are saying, "me too," both with words and with the stories that remain unspoken because they are still too raw to share we are reminded that the violations, the suffering that we have endured whether it is violence that is sexual or not

We are reminded that we are not alone and that the story doesn't end with suffering.

We know that there is renewal new life on the third day.

And maybe the third day will come quickly for you or maybe it will seem to take a lifetime. The promise of the meal that we eat during Eucharist and the water that we splash during baptism is that the Holy Spirit WILL come and create and nourish faith so that you may experience and embody the renewal the new life promised in faith.