Lenten Study 2021

Understanding and Responding to Racism

Week Four ~ Black Rage and Fear

~ In the assigned reading for this week, Austin Channing Brown writes candidly about her rage and fear living as a Black woman in a “world made for whiteness.” As you consider the world in which you live and move and have your being, in what ways does it favor those whose skin color is white?

~ When certain people express rage, certain other people have difficulty dealing with it. Black people are not supposed to get angry. Women are not supposed to get angry. Christians are not supposed to get angry . . . or so says society, yet we serve a God who experienced and expressed anger. Case in point: Jesus in the Temple at the beginning of Holy Week, overturning tables and driving out the money changers. (Mark 11:15-19) Brown writes: “Jesus throws folks out the building, and in so doing, creates space for the most marginalized to come in ~ the poor, the wounded, the children.” In the eyes of the powerless, Jesus’ anger led to freedom ~ “the freedom of belonging, the freedom of healing, and the freedom of participating as full members in God’s house.” Can you see how this familiar story from Scripture might be understood differently by a marginalized person than by a person who has lived with taken-for-granted advantages and privileges?

~ In writing about her cousin Dalin’s tragic death, Austin Channing Brown describes the anger she felt toward God as she sat in church at Dalin’s funeral. She writes: “My anger didn’t scare me. The Bible is filled with stories of God handling anger from people far more important than me. I needed to let someone have it. God was there.” Where, in Scripture, do we read about women and men expressing their anger toward God? What makes the difference between handling anger well and handling anger poorly?

~ As you have watched, read or listened to the news this past week, have you encountered racism being addressed? As you have watched television shows or interacted with others around you, have you witnessed or addressed racism? Have you witnessed the fear Austin describes living, as she does, in a world in which something bad happening to her Black husband or Black son are part of her everyday reality?

~ As we seek to better understand Black rage and fear, we must remember the importance of building relationships of trust with people of color before engaging them in conversation about how they experience racism and the rage and fear it triggers within them. As Jesus interacted with people from all walks of life, he bothered to get to know them before confronting or challenging them. What lessons might we learn from the One we have chosen to follow?

~ “Always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor never the tormented.” (Elie Wiesel) How might we take sides with our Black neighbors in ways that build trust and lead to a deeper understanding of how different our life experiences are?

~ A Franciscan Blessing: “May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that you may live deep within your heart. May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace. May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy. And my God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all God’s children.”

**\*\*\*\*Homework Assignment for March 24: Finish reading *I’m Still Here* by Austin Channing Brown**