

THE RESISTANCE

March 17, 2019

Lent 2

[Philippians 3:17-4:1](#)

[Luke 13:31-35](#)

(prayer)

I saw this political cartoon this week.



Welcome to Canada. We are currently blaming everything on the (fill in the blank).

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We do live in polarized and polarizing times.

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Maybe it has always been like this, but people seem to be firmly and rigidly lined up within their chosen opinion camps.

What has changed is... that people are increasingly able to live in isolated information bubbles: echo chambers where they are only exposed to like-minded views.

The danger of that reality is that we are becoming less nuanced in our understandings. We are less able to expand our thinking beyond what we already know... because we don't expose ourselves to anything different.

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I know that I can have this tendency too, so I quite intentionally "like" a variety of news pages on

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Facebook from all over the political spectrum.

I spend as much time reading article's from Breitbart as I do from the CBC.

My social media friends are equally diverse. I am very reluctant to unfriend or unfollow someone because I disagree with their positions on issues. I want to be exposed to more than my own comfort zone... even though this can lead to times of extreme personal frustration and yelling at the computer.

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Very early Friday morning, when news began to break on the radical *white nationalist* terrorist shootings in New Zealand, I found myself +at two in the morning) on my phone jumping from news site to news site trying to find out what was happening with the fast moving story.

I clicked on a number of different *breaking news* posts on Facebook. Generally, the posted stories were quite similar (details were all coming from the same basic sources in New Zealand). But, as I read through the various comment sections under the articles -- I saw how easy it was for people to hear the same news, very differently, through their own filters.

The name and motivations of the shooter were already known --- after all he live-streamed his murders in real time and he had uploaded a 74 page manifesto.

But depending on the lenses of particular commenters, [Brenton Tarrant](#) was a direct result of Donald Trump's rhetoric -- or -- he was a troubled lone wolf who was (justifiable) upset over the scourge of immigration.

By the next day, Rush Limbaugh was openly wondering if the shooter was really a *liberal pretending to be a nationalist* just to make the anti-globalist movement look bad; still others were quick to point out the “obvious” hidden meaning of the US president looking into a TV camera and calling undocumented immigration: an “invasion” - the exact same language used in the Christchurch murderer’s manifesto.

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And yet I wonder how many people spent enough time outside of their own echo chambers to realize that the same story was being told from polar opposite points of view.

And if they did realize, did they simply refuse to look closer and just closed their eyes and shouted “fake news”.

FYI: “fake news” does not mean *inaccurate news*; it means *news I don't like*.

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How willing are we to resist the temptation to believe that *what we know* is *all we need to know*?

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I don't mean to say that all opinions are valid and that every situation deserves a middle of the road conclusion.

There *are* stands to be taken and there *are* just societies to be created.

There is legitimately *fake* news out there.

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What I *am* saying is... that we can become more aware of the validity of *our* positions when we seek the deepest possible understanding beyond what we might believe right now. An authentic believer is one who is willing to risk doubting.

We do ourselves well to be aware of all that we can do that we can enforce what we believe.

If it can't stand up to our own scrutiny, how deep is it really.

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I was listening to a Sunday morning TV talk show on MSNBC. Didn't see who said it, but one of the panelists said: "You can't be friends with a bully. You can't be a bigot in the middle."

Now, bullies often benefit from friends outside their echo chamber, but I get the point.

If bullying and bigotry are behaviours and attitudes opposite to what you believe, it is hard not to resist what they stand for. Through your resistance, your alternate way of being can be lived out.

My point is... that we do ourselves a disservice by ignoring the bigots and bullies in our midst.

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I don't have HBO with my TV package, but (thanks to facebook) I was able to watch the [New Rules](#) segment of this past Friday Night's *Real Time with Bill Maher*... (excuse the rudeness, but I will quote Maher directly) "New Rule: Grow a Pair. Last week, the democrats made a terrible decision when they announced that they had turned down FoxNews' offer to host one of their 2020 primary debates saying Fox was nothing more than propaganda. Okay, so why not go on FoxNews and tell them that. ... You call yourself the resistance? Then fight behind enemy lines. That's what a resistance does."

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The first century context of the new testament includes the domination of the Roman Empire. This was true in Galilee and Judea where Jesus lived and taught and it was still true a few decades later in the communities of the early church that shared correspondence with the Apostle Paul.

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Jesus taught about the nearness of the *kingdom of god*. What he had to say about that could be given greater and deeper meaning if one understood what the *kingdom of caesar* was like.

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Paul of Tarsus was a formal citizen of the Roman Empire, so when he speaks about having a citizenship in heaven, he is building on layers of meaning.

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The Philippians letter is thought to be the oldest of the New Testament writings. Even in the early 50s, Paul was already able to articulate that it was a challenge for followers of Jesus' way to look beyond the immediate needs of the moment. Life, he argues, is more than a good meal or self-aggrandizement. He invites the believers to trust beyond what they can see and taste around themselves: to imagine being part of something more.

If Paul, the Jewish born citizen of Rome could see a greater value in being a citizen of heaven, then it should be worth a deeper look.

Resist, the god of your belly and stand firm in the Lord, Jesus Christ as your salvation.

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News came to Jesus from some of his fellow Pharisees that the Tetrarch of Galilee was looking to arrest him.

This King Herod of Galilee was the son of Herod the Great of Judea: whom Matthew's gospel claims was willing to kill every baby boy in Bethlehem in order to end Jesus' life before he could barely speak.

We don't know if Jesus was aware of this coincidence of names and history. Jesus certainly knew that the younger Herod was the one who had arrested and killed Jesus' mentor: John the Baptist. But

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there was no escape to Egypt this time. Jesus was determined stay on his current path, no matter what Herod thought.

You go tell that fox that I have no intention to stop what I am doing.

Even so, Jesus was realistically aware how history had treated those who resisted the brokers of power.

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Jesus knew the ways of the Empires of Earth: he had lived under their thumb his whole life - they kept the peace through acts (and threats) of violence. Herod let the word out: Jesus, like John before him, was a threat to public order.

Sometimes, the kingdom of caesar could hold back the resistance through fear.

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Jesus had found a different path - peace through compassion. Even when history was filled with rejection and death, Jesus longed to reach out with the care of a mother hen: protecting the brood under her wings.

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Whether it was Jesus' compassionate kingdom of god resisting the violent kingdom of caesar -or- the citizens of heaven finding safety outside the citizenry of rome, a message found in our scriptures today is... with eyes wide open, we can overcome our fear and keep on the journey of faith.

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This is the way of God in which we ground our trust.

We can resist the ideologies of selfish division that manifests itself in xenophobic violence, and the rhetoric that justifies it before and after the fact.

We do not do this by ignoring those who oppose a just and equal world, but by proclaiming our gospel truth:

- In Christ, we are a new creation, not bound to what we presumed to be our fate: gendre, nationality, station in life - none of that divides us within the heart of God;
- When we protect and nurture the vulnerable we are serving the Christ within our midst;
- And our full love of God is intimately tied to how well we love our neighbour as ourselves.

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Jesus' mission and ministry was a lived-out resistance to the ways of his day's empire. But... He did not stop at being anti-Rome. He was pro-God.

He did not just criticize the oppressors. He showed another way.

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This paved the way for Paul, twenty years later, who saw that, although Jesus and his movement was strongly rooted within Jesus' hebrew religion and culture, the message and way of living needed to be shared and available to a much broader audience.

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2019 has its own Empire entities. They are not always formal governing bodies or leaders. They are ideas shared in chat rooms and in desert training camps and deep woods hide-a-ways.

They expose themselves in dehumanizing our neighbours just because they are different. They trust in their own lust for power and pocketbook.

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If we believe in an alternate vision, as Jesus and Paul seemed to, we must resist.

For in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female: all one; all heirs to a holy promise of inclusion. (See Gal3:28)

And God created all humankind in the holy image. (See Gen1:27)

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If someone tries to convince you differently, resist!

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Let us pray:

Holy God of Jesus Christ,

We struggle to stay on your way of peace when it is easier to isolate ourselves. Help us to resist the isolation so that we can leave our sanctuaries and live out your compassion in the world.

Amen.

#269VU "The Care The Eagle Gives Her Young"

(tune: #266VU)

May the way of Jesus rise to meet you.

May the spirit be always at your back.

May the light of god shine warm upon your face.

And may the outpouring of holy love fall gently on the earth.

Amen.

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