

FEAR OF THE OTHER

Immigration and a Christian View

“The opposite of love is not hate, it is indifference.”

Elie Wiesel, a Romanian-born American Jewish writer, professor, political activist, Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor.

NO FEAR IN LOVE STEFFANY GRETZINGER

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pu7Tc_j62ak



Erin with Daisy in the Lobby.
Aliza Nisenbaum, 2015.

WHO WAS THE GREATEST OF THE OTHER?

- Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37
- To whom had the Great Other ministered prior to the discussion with the religious lawyer?
- Why would Willimon in *The Fear of the Other* refer to Jesus as “the despised stranger”?
- Share reading from *The Fear of the Other*: p. 90

*There is no fear in love, but **perfect love drives out fear**, because fear expects punishment. The person who is afraid has not been made perfect in love. We love because God first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen. This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.* 1 John 4:18-

21 (CEB)

1 JOHN 4:18: *PERFECT LOVE CASTS OUT FEAR.*

- Willimon: The Greek is easy to read...but its message is hard to live.
- Who is the Other? Have you ever been The Other? What does this mean to you? How did you feel?
- Thomas Aquinas observed that you cannot combat fear with fearlessness. He wrote that fearlessness was a VICE; not a virtue. Fear is born of love...we fear we will lose someone or something we love.
- *So...how do we fear rightly?*

Our Brand Is Justice. Ernesto Yerena Montejano,
2009. 26 Oct 2017.



THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD, WE ARE ALL OTHERS.

- “There but for the grace of God go I” - First used in the sixteenth century by John Bradford, an English Reformer, as he watched a group of men being led to the gallows. He was eventually burned for crimes against the Crown.
- *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8
- “**The line separating good and evil passes** not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties...but **right through every human heart.**” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-56*. 1973.

YOUR DAMASCUS ROAD

- Willimon's Damascus Road: p 6
- Have you had a Damascus Road similar to Willimon's?
- What did you feel?
- Fear?
- ????

Border Patrol Target #5, near Gulf of Mexico, Texas, 2013. Richard Misrach.



WHY DO WE FEAR?

- There is scientific evidence that fear is the product of a neurological response.
- David Rock (*Your Brain at Work*, 2009)
- Our limbic system is aroused by a set of “hot buttons” that trigger intense peril response.
- Millions of years of evolution and social conditioning programs us to approach easily when we perceive rewards, but to run away from perceived dangerous Others.
- When we sense threats:
 - 1. We think less clearly
 - 2. We have difficulty receiving and assimilating new information
 - 3. We make mistakes in perception and interpretation, coming to false deductions
 - 4. We tend to respond negatively to situations, focusing on the downside and taking fewer risks

WHAT MAKES US SENSE FEAR FROM THE OTHER?

- Fight or flight helps keep us safe...so when is fear harmful and what stimuli trigger our fears?
- Who are the Other?
- Psychologist Melanie Suchet says the Other are the “not me,” those we have difficulty identifying with.
- To understand the Other we must **look at their faces** (Emmanuel Levinas). We must recognize their humanness. We may not only look different, but we may not respect or like their differences in ideas, opinions, actions.
- By recognizing their humanness we are less likely to try to destroy their selfhood and perhaps they will not try and destroy us in revenge.

WHO ARE YOUR OTHERS?

- What human differences cause you the most discomfort?
- Are there sources you read or listen to who tend to stoke your fears?
- Are there others you used to fear, but no longer fear? Why do you no longer fear them?



The Migration Series, 1940-41. Panel 40: The migrants arrived in great numbers. Jacob Lawrence. 26 Oct 2017.

“Turn off the news and love thy neighbor.” – Marquee at Bear Creek Community Bible Church, Benbrook, Texas

IMMIGRATION: FEAR OF THE OTHER

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- 2012 General Conference voted to support the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors)
- First introduced in Congress in 2001; all subsequent versions have been defeated
- 2017 Version:
 - Minors than 18 years old on the date of their initial entry to the United States (Dream Act of 2017, S.1615, Sec.3(b)(1)(B), and HR3440, Sec.3(b)(1)(B)).
 - Have proof of having arrived in the United States before age 16
 - Have proof of residence in the United States for at least four consecutive years since their date of arrival
 - If male, have registered with the Selective Service
 - Be between the ages of 12 and 35 at the time of bill enactment
 - Have graduated from an American high school, obtained a GED, or been admitted to an institution of higher education
 - Be of good moral character (Extensive list of activities that define lack of good moral character)

DACA (2012)

- *And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.* Leviticus 19:33-34
- What do you know about DACA?
- How would Jesus' teachings relate to DACA?
 - *"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" Matthew 19:14 (NKJV)*
- UMC General Board of Church and Society urges church members to contact our congressional representatives. Their petition to Congress reminds us [United Methodists] that "our immigrant brothers and sisters deserve dignity, welcome, and the opportunity to flourish."

IMMIGRATION AND REFORM

- UMC Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño:
- “I always view the immigration issue as at least two-sided. One side is the political side and the great need for comprehensive immigration reform. The other side is the need for compassionate care for the immigrant among us. There is no political will in this country anywhere to work on comprehensive immigration reform, and that of great concern...”

“AMERICANS IN THEIR HEARTS, IN THEIR MINDS,
IN EVERY SINGLE WAY BUT ONE: ON PAPER.”

- UMC Social Principles: “...all persons, regardless of country of origin, [are] members of the family of God.”
- United Methodists are urged “to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all.”
- 2012 General Conference asked that all parties of the United Methodist Church work together on immigration [reform].
- Can United Methodists agree to disagree? Can we work together on immigration reform? What can we do?

WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF FEAR?

- During the depths of the Great Depression (1932) FDR stated in his First Inaugural Address: “Only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
- How do we conquer our fear of the Other?
- Will Smith On the Other Side of Fear
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Phhwb0ljZ8>

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF FEAR

- “God placed the best things in life on the other side of terror, on the other side of your maximum fear, are all the best things in life.” Will Smith
- Is Smith right? Why or why not? What does this mean in regard to our fear of the Other?



The Peaceable Kingdom. Edward Hicks, 1846-47.

DO WE HAVE THE COURAGE?

- Courage – as a soldier (Aristotle) or as a martyr (Aquinas) – remains intimately connected to vulnerability because courage is the WILLINGNESS TO MAKE ONESELF VULNERABLE TO THREAT IN ORDER TO PURSUE A GOOD...
- Psalm 27 – David wrote a song about his fear of his real enemies who sought to destroy him:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?...

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord! Psalm 27:1 & 14

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS



Cruzando El Rio Bravo (Border Crossing). Luis Riménez, 1989.

A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

Lord, We reach out to you for your guidance.

Please show us which way to turn.

Calm our anxious thoughts, come speak into our minds.

Strengthen us as we falter and feel weary.

May we feel strength rising up within our hearts.

Bring clarity into our visions and dreams.

You unite all Christians into one body.

Remind us this day, and every day, that when one member of the body suffers, we all suffer.

We trust that you are with us, no matter where we go,

Or what we decide to do.

You journey with us always.

Amen.

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