

WEEK TWO



I WILL

ACCEPT & RESIST

Jesus in the Temple
Luke 19:45-20:8

Opening Ritual:

To begin class each week, have a cup of water and a bowl. Invite everyone to take a deep breath as the leader slowly pours the water into the bowl.

Then pray aloud:

God of Water and the Spirit,

May we be open to the new things you are doing.

Reveal to us today what it means to accept your freedom and power and how we can resist evil, injustice and oppression. Amen.

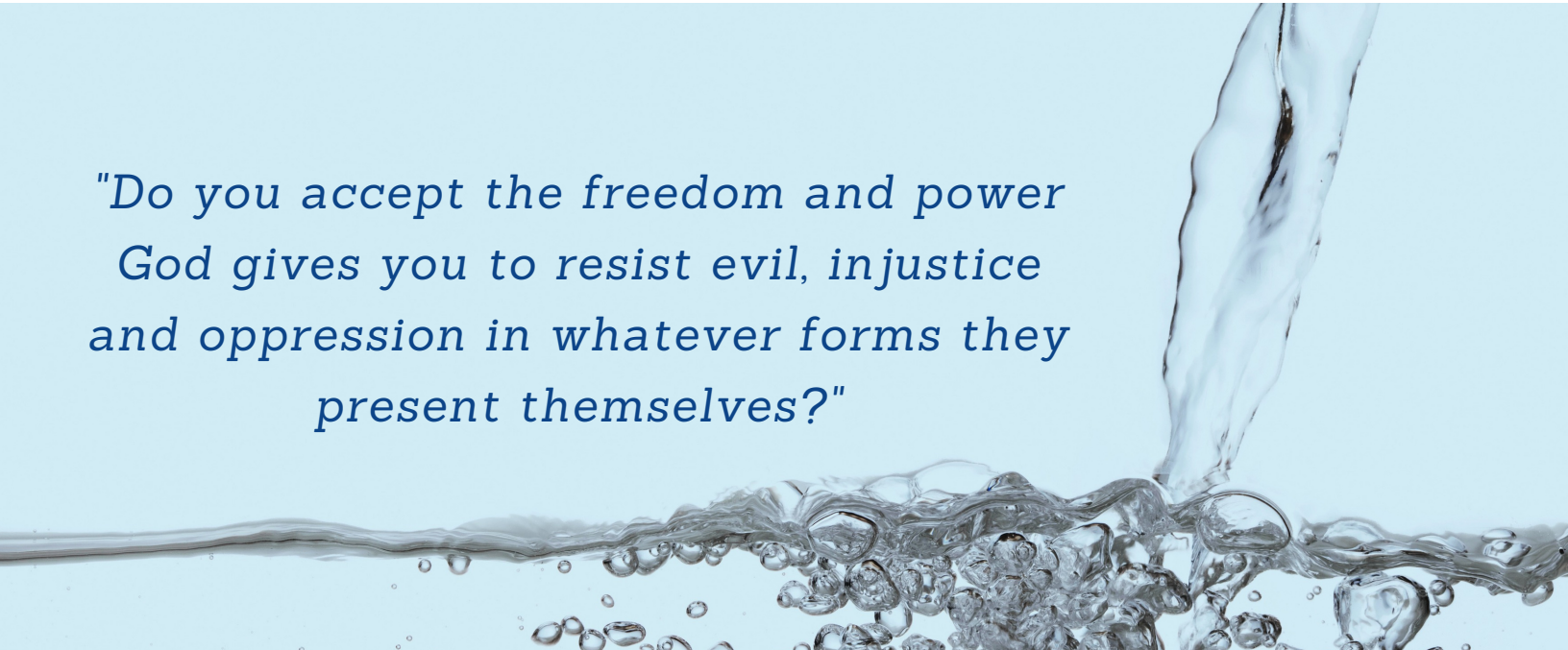
Scripture Reading: Luke 19:45-20:8

45 Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; 46 and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." 47 Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; 48 but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

1 One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders 2 and said to him, "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?" 3 He answered them, "I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: 4 Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" 5 They discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why did you not believe him?' 6 But if we say, 'Of human origin,' all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet." 7 So they answered that they did not know where it came from. 8 Then Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

Discussion:

- What makes something a den of robbers? What's the purpose of having a den?
- The scripture tells us that Jesus had been teaching daily in the temple. What do you think he was saying that had people "spellbound"?
- How does the meaning of authority change based on context? Who or what gives us authority in specific situations?
- Do you believe baptism is from heaven, or of human origin? Or both? Why?



*"Do you accept the freedom and power
God gives you to resist evil, injustice
and oppression in whatever forms they
present themselves?"*

Pastoral Reflection:

Freedom and power: two words that are used often in patriotic conversations, but a lot less in faith-based settings. It is really interesting to hear these words used in such a different context. In the second part of the baptismal vows, we accept that freedom and power come from God, and it is through God we have the strength to stand up to evil, injustices, and oppression. Evil, injustice, and oppression present themselves in all sorts of ways, often disguised in larger systems and selfish motives. How do we determine who has authority and why? When we make these baptismal vows, we are committing to looking at the greater picture, challenged to call out evil, injustice and oppression. When we do this, we impact the story. In this week's pastoral reflection, Zach Helton helps frame the story, both big and small by envisioning things as waves and as an ocean.



Most of us live most of our life in a sort of trance. We're entranced by the stories we tell – stories about who we are and what we're allowed to do – stories about who's in charge and who has to follow. Sometimes these stories are useful. Sometimes they become a problem. The trick is keeping them in perspective – not confusing a story with Reality.

Imagine waves on the surface of the ocean. The waves rise, they move, and they fall. They are separate from one another, with unique forms and different ways of moving. Change the lens, however, and one could just as easily say there are no waves at all. "Wave" is just a word, a story we project onto one, small piece of the great, unified, ever-changing ocean. You can look at the same landscape through the lens of the "wave" story or through the lens of the "ocean" story, and what you experience feels very different.

Sometimes, I wonder if

Jesus was doing a similar thing with humanity. While everyone was living their lives totally absorbed in small,



controllable stories of the waves, he lived his life by the story of the ocean – something larger than himself, something that had always been and would always be, even if he crashed on the shore. I sometimes wonder if, when he preached, "Metanoia! The Kingdom of God is at Hand," he was like a wave, preaching to other waves: "Metanoia! The Ocean is at hand! Let go of the stories you thought constrained you! You are actually something bigger, truer, and more beautiful than you ever let yourself imagine!"

Authority is just a story we like to tell. It's like the story of the wave. We made it up. It's useful, sometimes, but it's far from the whole story, and when people use those stories of authority to commandeer Temples as marketplaces, to oppress and manipulate the vulnerable, and to loom larger than everyone else... that's when it's time to ground ourselves in the freedom of a bigger story. That's when we need the story of the ocean. The story of God. That's when it's time, like Jesus did with the scribes, to expose just how subjective and self-serving those stories really are. That's when it's time to accept the freedom and power that's already yours, because at the end of the day, you're not just a wave. You are the whole ocean.



---Zach Helton, West End UMC Media Specialist

Connection:

- What does it mean to accept freedom from God? What does it mean to accept power from God?
- How does the freedom and power of God help us resist evil, injustice and oppression?
- How does the freedom and power we have through God change our story?

Closing Ritual:

At the conclusion of class each week, invite everyone to stand, Then say aloud:

*Members of our Beloved Community,
Will you accept the freedom and power God has given you
to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms
they present themselves?*

In response, invite each person to touch the water on their way out the door, saying **I WILL!**



I WILL
ACCEPT AND RESIST

