

What is Jesus Doing?

LASHON HARA

Wow. Interesting day. So today (as it happens what the Catholics call Maundy Thursday, Christ's day in the garden of Gethsemane) was the day that I had purposed to apologize corporately to the flock and volunteers for my inappropriate political diatribe of last Thursday (see the last blog "My Bad... Really"). I had gotten a call yesterday from my friend Bobby, a saint who was homeless and now works part-time managing the Food and Care shelter at the Lutheran Church where the feeding in question resides. At first, when I saw the call from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, I thought perhaps that I was going to be dismissed as itinerant volunteer pastor for my faux pas. Bobby, as it turned out however, just wanted to be sure I was "all right" after the incident last week. I assured him I was, and was somewhat relieved.

So, after arriving and greeting our friends, and praying with a woman who felt she was being haunted by the spirit of her abusive father, who, she revealed, was a self-hating Jew turned Baptist who hated all Jews (I got a bad chill just typing that), I got up to give the Word. I apologized as I had purposed I would, and was beginning to give the Word, which is the story of "The thief on the right" of Jesus, to illustrate God's amazing Grace and Mercy upon those who even after an entire life of sin, repent and receive Him in their hearts, when something very strange happened.

A man, about my age, dressed rather self-consciously like a European immigrant, whom I had seen numerous times at this feeding, and who never responded good or bad to the Word or to me personally, all of a sudden gave me "the finger" when I mentioned the name Barrabas, whom the Jewish crowd preferred to be spared when they called for the death of Jesus Messiah. I was taken a bit aback, but finished the Word, which was well-received, and then went over to where this man was sitting. I squatted down to eye-level, smiled at him and asked "why the finger?"

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He then launched into an angry and impassioned diatribe about how I had no idea who Barrabas was and how dare I say such a thing about him, and that I should be ashamed of myself for “lying” to the people about Christ when it was the Church and Christians who murdered 6 million Jews in Nazi Germany. I responded kindly that no real follower of Jesus would ever condone, let alone enact such a heinous act against their fellow man and that it was Nazis, not Christians, who did that, and just because a Nazi wears a belt-buckle that says “Gott Mit Uns” (God with us) does not mean they know Jesus. He flabbergasted me then by saying that he has heard all that before and he doesn’t believe it because HE USED TO BE CHRISTIAN. He then asked me if I knew what “Lashon Hara” was. I admitted I did not and he harangued me for being a Jew who does not know his own culture. I admitted that I knew Torah, but not so much Talmud, and asked if he would enlighten me, to which he replied sarcastically, that it would take more than 5 minutes. I then gave him my phone number and suggested that we get together for an hour or two or however long he thought it would take for me to understand.

He sneered, said again that I was a liar, and refused my hand of fellowship. One of the ladies that overheard this exchange said she was amazed at how gracious I was in the face of his abject hatred and anger. I only said, “it is exactly what my Lord did, how else could I respond”.

I prayed for him all the way home and my heart was still heavy, when I received a voicemail from him which said, I was a “smarmy, self-righteous little prick, and the gathering swine and the devils are welcome to me”. After looking up lashon hara, which is Hebrew for “evil-speaking” or slander, I sent him back a text.

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This is it, word-for-word:

Hi Steve. Thanks for the information. I see that your position is that I have slandered the good name of Barabbas. It is an interesting position.

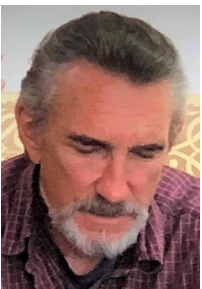
I don't know where you stand on Solomon, whom the histories of the Old Testament tell us divided Israel with his idolatry, (or is that more lashon hara?) but his word in Proverbs 22:24 may sum up your current state of disaffection.

You may say whatever you like about me, I'm a pretty big boy and I can deal with it, but I kindly caution you to be careful about how you categorize and slander God's beloved, the poor. I should also say that I find it strange that you would deign to eat with those you call pigs.

In any case Steve, if you ever care to have a one-on-one conversation about this, I'm still open to it.

~John

Some day, huh? The devil is a liar and was from the beginning. I will continue to pray for Steve. I find it incomprehensible that he was ever a follower of Jesus, but in any case, my prayer is that one day he will become one in truth and in deed.



In head-shaking wonder but unbowed in Christ Jesus.

In His Love always,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi