

Podcast Transcript

10.16.22 Pentecost 19C

- [Jeremiah 31:27-34](#) and [Psalm 119:97-104](#) •
- [Genesis 32:22-31](#) and [Psalm 121](#) •
- [2 Timothy 3:14-4:5](#) •
- [Luke 18:1-8](#)

<<Music: “Building Up a New World,” 1st verse, fade out under opening sentence.>>
<<“We are building up a new world, builders must be strong.”>>

Intro:

- Beloveds, welcome back to The Word Is Resistance, the podcast where we’re exploring what our Christian sacred texts have to teach us about living, surviving, even thriving in the context of empire, tyranny, violence, and repression - the times in which we are living today. What do our sacred stories have to teach us, as white folks, about our role in resistance, in showing up, in liberation?
- What wisdom is there for us as white Christians in these troubled, violent times of pandemics, rising authoritarianism, and racial capitalism? What beauty can we find in our resistance?
- I’m Rev. Anne Dunlap, pronouns she/her/hers. I’m a United Church of Christ minister and I’m the Faith Organizing Coordinator for Showing Up Racial for Justice (SURJ). I live in the place currently called* Buffalo, NY, here in the homelands of the Haudenosaunee peoples.
- This podcast is a project of SURJ-Faith and is particularly designed for white Christians – white Christians talking to other white Christians about race and white supremacy. We believe white Christians like us, like me, have a responsibility to commit ourselves to *resisting* white supremacy, to speaking up and showing up and disrupting white supremacy where we find it, including in our own Christian tradition.
- *And we do this work remembering* “We are building up a new world.” This live recording of Dr. Vincent Harding’s song for the freedom movement is of a multi-racial “movement choir practice” in Denver, CO in December 2014, being led by Minister Daryl J. Walker. We are deeply grateful to the Freeney-Harding family for letting us use the song for this podcast.
- The Word is Resistance.

We finish up our Disability Justice series this week. We’ve been looking at the readings from Luke’s gospel and asking what a framework of disability justice can bring to these stories. It’s been a great series, and we hope you have learned a lot along with us.

I mentioned at the end of last week’s episode that this episode was going to be a conversation between the lovely Blyth Barnow and myself. However, Blyth has covid, and of course the

priority should be on her rest and recovery, and not using up that valuable energy chatting with me for over an hour. She did send me a few thoughts she had hoped to share about today's text, which I'll share in just a bit.

We wanted to share about Blyth having covid for a couple of reasons: 1, to remind us that people are still getting covid and the pandemic is still a thing, beloveds; and 2, to model a real practical example of what disability justice and access can look like: checking in with someone and shifting priorities and adapting plans based on what their access needs are, in this case letting Blyth rest and recover while also figuring out how to include her voice (or at least her words). It also means adapting my own expectations of this episode to let it just be a little shorter this time.

This is what disability justice looks like, in practice. And Blyth, we pray your recovery is quick and easeful and with no long-term issues. We love you!

<<Music interlude, verse 2 of "Building Up a New World.">>
<<"Courage, sisters, brothers, people: don't get weary, though the way be long.">>

This week's story from Luke is a parable, about the Persistent Widow. Here's how it goes:

Luke 18:1-8

*18:1 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and **not to lose heart**.*

18:2 He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people.

18:3 In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.'

18:4 For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone,

18:5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'"

18:6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says.

*18:7 And will not God grant justice to God's chosen ones who **cry to** God day and night? Will God delay long in helping them?*

18:8 I tell you, God will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

I think we can all feel some solidarity with this widow
And having to deal with judges
Who don't really care at all about justice
Or even care about people, right?

When I heard Blyth's thoughts about this text,
I knew we were both thinking about
The persistence of the widow in the face
Of what seems like a pretty impenetrable unjust system,
And how the widow's refusal to give up
Can help us in understanding how to practice disability justice.

I'm going to set up this text for us a little,
Before I share Blyth's thoughts,
Because I think it's important to recognize
That this little parable about not losing heart
Comes right after Jesus talking to his community
About the kind of suffering from Rome they are going to endure,
Maybe even have already endured.
And in just a couple of chapters
Jesus will describe violence from Roman authorities
That includes unjust judges and courts.
And of course he then experiences this in his own body.

I also want to point out this language of
"Crying out to God day and night."
Crying out is deeply embedded in the biblical story,
As part of what is necessary to get to freedom.
The people of Israel cry out to God in Egypt,
They cry out to God in Bablyon,
They *cry out* and God *listens*, and God *acts*,
Through them and with them, to get them free.
In his book "The Prophetic Imagination,"
Walter Brueggemann describes that cry as
"The primal scream that permits the beginning of history"
A cry of "real restless grief" that "expect[s] answers" from God.**

So, this parable is not just a nice tale
About making sure you have a consistent prayer life,
Which is certainly what I've been taught about it.

It's a parable about what to do to not *lose heart*,
To *not give up*, in the face of the kind of violence Jesus describes,
The violence they will experience in part
Because of the kind of world they are trying to build,
The time when the "son of man" comes,
Or the "kingdom of God," Jesus calls it elsewhere.
It's a call to persistence in *crying out* our real, restless grief
At the way the world is,
And the reminder that God does hear us,
And acts through and with us,
As evident by how we persist in caring for one another,
How we persist in building a new world together.

I want to get this out here for us because
Conditions aren't much different for us right now.
Like Jesus's community,
We are living under an increasingly authoritarian and violent regime
That will do anything it can to protect
Its power and wealth,
And really does not care how many of us die
Or are left physically, psychologically, or cognitively disabled
In the process.
And I don't just mean covid,
Though I certainly do mean that too,
But all the ways these systems harm and disable us,
That we've talked about a lot over this series.
I don't want to live in that kind of world,
And I'm pretty sure you don't either.

Things are hard right now, like they were then.
I feel that, heavy, in my chest,
These days.
Maybe you do too.

And so maybe this short little parable

About a widow who refuses to give up her outcry
Comes right on time.

So with all that in mind
And in heart,
Let's hear from Blyth.
I transcribed her voice memos to me,
And this is what she had to say
About the persistence of the widow,
And the practice of disability justice.

Blyth's words:

"I found myself thinking about the persistence of care, how much care work is involved with disability justice, not necessarily the front lines work we're accustomed to looking for but is powerful nonetheless.

How disability justice offers so much grace and enoughness just as you are, how that is a good antidote to those of us raised in whiteness where our worth is often having to be earned

The Persistent Widow also reminds me of the harm reduction organizers who just keep showing up. I think there's something about being unshook in your understanding of your own worth, your people's worth, that allows that determination and persistence, whether in a more visible role like demanding something of a judge, or just in the consistency of showing up for each other."

Those were Blyth's thoughts,
And I think they beautifully describe
And amplify that sense of the parable
Of the persistence we need to not lose heart,
To keep going in the face of really tough times:
The persistence of care.
Grace and enoughness.
Being Unshook in our understanding of our own and our people's worth.
Demanding justice, which is to say, crying out.
The consistency of showing up for each other.

Blyth's words reminded me of Mia Mingus's work
On access intimacy and liberatory access,
With their emphasis on love and care and deep relationship
That persistent and consistent showing up for each other.

It's a kind of access that, Mingus says, "demands that the responsibility for access shifts from being an individual responsibility to a collective responsibility. That access shifts from being silencing to freeing; from being isolating to connecting; from hidden and invisible to visible; from burdensome to valuable; from a resentful obligation to an opportunity; from shameful to powerful; from [rigid] to creative. It's the "good" kind of access, the moments when we are pleasantly surprised and feel seen. It is a way of doing access that transforms both our "today" and our "tomorrow." In this way, Liberatory access both resists against the world we don't want and actively builds the world we *do want*."***

Let me read that last line again:

"Liberatory access both resists against the world we don't want and actively builds the world we *do want*."

That's this parable.

That's the persistence of our outcry,

And the persistence of our building a world of loving, liberatory access.

That's how we don't lose heart, together.

That's how we get through, together.

<< *Music interlude, verse 2 of "Building Up a New World."* >>

<< *"Courage, sisters, brothers, people: don't get weary, though the way be long."* >>

[Call to Action and outro]

For your call to action this week, I encourage you to read Mia Mingus's piece together with your people, and talk together about how you can nourish access intimacy and liberatory access together. Maybe it's how you provide care for one another, or cry out for liberatory access in your church or workplace. Mingus offers lots of examples to chew on, and you can also think about Blyth's points too: how will you collectively practice and nourish ~

The persistence of care.

Grace and enoughness.

Being Unshook in our understanding of our own and our people's worth.

Demanding justice, which is to say, crying out.

The consistency of showing up for each other.

We are having another virtual listener meet-up on November 2nd at 8pm eastern, 5pm pacific, and we'd love to hear from you then about what you've come up with in response to these prompts, and what you've learned over this series. Several of our contributors will be there to

share what we've learned along with you! So we hope to see you there! The registration link is in the transcript, in the episode description on Soundcloud, and on our SURJ-Faith social media.

- [Registration Link](#)

Thanks as always for joining us from wherever you are on this good earth. We'd love to hear from you all, especially from folks of color and non-Christian folks, by filling out the listener survey on our podcast page at surj dot org. And give us a "like" or rate us on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you listen to our podcast.

You can find out more about SURJ at surj dot org, and our podcast lives on Soundcloud; search on "The Word Is Resistance." Transcripts are available as well on our website, which include references, resources, and action links. We're taking a break next week, and then will be back with a great episode from guest contributor Audrey Gale Hall. Audrey has been interning with SURJ-Faith this year and I'm very excited for their episode!. And of course, a huge thanks to our sound editor, Claire Hitchins!

(Words of blessing/encouragement)

- Beloveds, do not lose heart. Cry out, and keep building.
- Blessings to you in all that you do to resist injustice, and in all that you do to build up a new world.
- Love and liberation, beloveds. Love and liberation.
- Until next time. I'm Rev. Anne Dunlap.

<<Verse 3 of "Building Up A New World, Verse 1 repeated.>>
<<"Rise, Shine, Give God glory, Children of the Light"
We are building up a new world, builders must be strong.>>

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RESOURCES:

**Walter Brueggemann, "The Prophetic Imagination," 2nd Edition, Fortress Press, 2001. Pp. 9-14.

***Mia Mingus, "[Access Intimacy, Interdependence, and Disability Justice](#)"

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REFERENCES:

The Jewish Annotated New Testament, NRSV. 2nd Ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, editors. Oxford University Press, 2017. Check all the amazing essays in the back!

*Why do I say “currently called” Buffalo, NY? Indigenous scholar Damien Lee: “When I write, I avoid the phrase ‘...in what is now Canada.’ I use ‘...in what is currently Canada’ to open possibilities for imagining futurities beyond the settler state.” [Check out this post for more.](#)

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