

Tuesday Reflection for August 4, 2020

## It is Us

Several weeks ago, in a segment of Pastor's Unplugged, I mentioned a book I had just started reading called, *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* by Lenny Duncan. It is a powerful book that talks about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with both praise and lament. Duncan is ordained in our church and his story is inspiring and challenging. He talks about his life on the streets as a teenager where he both used drugs and was a sex worker. He talks lovingly about the first time he walked into a Lutheran Church just outside of Philly and the love and acceptance he found within that community of faith.

Duncan also challenges us to live into the theology and God we proclaim. He talks passionately about the ways that our country believes God is dead and how we have allowed nationalism to keep us locked into Holy Saturday. We, collectively as a society, have become the very ones who crucified Jesus. Our nationalism has prevented us from celebrating with joy Easter morning and in turn has made us timid and fearful instead of alive and actively witnessing to the power of the God we proclaim. I want to share an expanded quote from the book.

You want to resurrect your church? You want the ELCA to continue to be relevant and full of life? Are you tired of the narrative of decline? Then get the hell out of Holy Saturday, Church. Stand with Jesus at the dawn and resist. Resist closing our borders from the world. Resist the narrative that only wealth can make this world whole. Resist war and all its manifestations. Resist nativism and the national delusion that we are more special than any other land or people. Resist anyone who tries to tame your Jesus and downplay his revolutionary message. Resist the idea that the ballot box or either party will save us. We are the ones we have been waiting for. Resist anything that doesn't line up with the arc of the gospel; resist vehemently, as if your lives depended on it- because they do. Pages 108-109

Wow! We are the ones we have been waiting for! Those are powerful statements that Duncan makes. He challenges us in so many ways on very issues that are currently in our public discussions. We have an awesome God who has always stood with the oppressed and the poor and calls us to do the same. I believe that we need to own our part in the decline of the church in society and we need to stand with Jesus once again at both the cross and the empty tomb. I commend this book to everyone. For me, it has reminded me of who I am, a loved and forgiven child of an amazing God. May it empower us to repent and to move forward as the hands and voice of God in our world.

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne

Duncan, Lenny. *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.* Fortress Press: Minneapolis. 2019.