

## Summary of Just Faith Workshop

Two lenses through which to view Jesus' life and ministry:

**I. The lens of his Jewishness: what would Jesus have assumed, taken as a given for his listeners? Ramifications of covenant.**

Moses charged with liberation from...	And liberation for...
1. An economics of inequality/ affluence: a few with much, many with little or nothing.	1. An economics of justice and equality: every household gets land
2. A politics of oppression and exploitation: people at the bottom have no voice; enforced by violence or threat of violence	2. A politics of justice and compassion: every household has a voice, those who do not (widow, orphan, foreigner) are treated with hospitality, compassion, and special consideration.
3. A religion of a "puppet god": a religious system that rubber stamps the preferences and appetites of the elite.	3. A religion of God's freedom and judgment: God is bigger than our imagining, where there is justice, compassion, equality, God is present.

This understanding of covenant is integral to the faith of the "good Jew."  
Mosaic covenant is all about building community: grounded in the laws of its people.

Sabbath: covenant tradition that comes out of the creation story. Why does God rest? Slaves don't rest, so sabbath is a tradition of "holy work stoppage." A position of non-exploitation intertwined with position of prayer.

Sabbatical year: a "holy work stoppage" year. Since it was staggered so neighbors became dependent on one another for survival. Volunteer crops were free to anyone: people on margins cared for. Topsoil maintained: right relationship defined between people and creation; a position of stewardship and nurture.

Jubilee year: a "super" sabbatical year: a way of correcting abuses of covenant. Debts forgiven, land returned, slaves and indentured servants set free.

Prophets highlighted ruptures in the covenant, i.e. sin. They are the great reminders of original meanings. Sin is

- a social matter
- connected with blindness (in one's best interest to be blind)

# Summary of Just Faith Workshop

## II. The lens of the historical/political/economic situation at the time of Jesus.

- Pillaging through taxes (2/3rd of Galilee land lost to Romans through tax forfeiture). Tax collector positions auctioned off, only native were allowed to bid, so all tax collectors were Jews.
- Collusion with the ruling class: they are allowed to keep wealth and prestige through maintenance of order. In their self-interest to repress rebellion.
- Discord between Jews: Jews do Roman's dirty work for them (tax collection, suppression of rebellion). Anger directed at Jews, not mainly Romans
- Those who lost land through tax forfeiture were disenfranchised. Only way to survive was as:
  - Fishermen
  - Day laborers
  - Prostitutes
  - Sell self/children into indentured servitude
- The disenfranchised are the "large crowds" following Jesus.
- Rome induced some Jews to betray the covenant.

Impossible to paint Jesus as socially/politically disinterested. His teaching was aimed at problems of status quo.

- Kingdom of God, Reign of God: as opposed to reign of Caesar. A politically charged phrase that conveys that status quo is not what God wants.
- Greek word for gospel borrowed from Greek/Roman term for announcement of victory, i.e. good news of a military victory. Christian use of term shows that this is not "good news" at all; the only "good news" is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What Jesus preached was **not**

- the response of accommodation (Sadducees and rich folk)
- the response of violence (Zealots)
- preoccupation with points of religion to avoid bigger questions (Pharisees)
- withdrawal (Essenes)
- hopelessness (most of the people)

**but...**

A radical revolution - started by John the Baptist

- John preached the recovery of community
- Baptism of repentance represents an inner cleansing
- Baptism of Jesus aligns Jesus with John
- Jesus expands the covenant in ways Jews are not comfortable with
- Israel destroyed by self-interest
- He crafts a response that is resistant but not violent
- God takes sides whenever the needs of the affluent and the poor collide

## **Summary of Just Faith Workshop**

Two dovetailing parts of the gospel tradition: two great tragedies:

1. People starving
2. People amassing goods who will not share.

Luke 18:18 ff; Luke 12:16 ff; Luke 4:16 ff; Acts 4:32-35 a reiteration of Deut 15:4; James 5.

We need to be for the other - give ourselves away.